

**THE USES OF TELEVISION BROADCAST-BASED DISTANCE
EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF *LIBERTY LEARNING CHANNEL*
*PROGRAMME***

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own original work. It has been submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Human Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. It has not been submitted before in any form for any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution. Where use was made of the work of others, it has been duly acknowledge by means of complete references.

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ABSTRACT

Education is considered as an essential tool for the long-term development of most countries. The provision of education to only part of a community or part of the world reinforces relative deprivation. To counteract such an effect, South Africa, a geographically large country, in which the population is scattered, where economic disparities are aligned to race, where qualified teachers and specialists in certain subject areas are scarce, and where there is an illiteracy rate of 29 percent, hope has been expressed that television broadcast based distance education may be a viable alternative to expanding formal education provision extensively and quickly.

This study investigates the role of television broadcast-based distance education in South Africa as a possibility for extending the provision of formal education to large numbers of learners and how the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and the country's Department of Education fulfils the promise of extending education. This objective was addressed by first giving a critique of conventional education systems and why distance education is an alternative option for provision of education. Further, the study traces a general picture of education in Africa and the educational situation in South Africa, highlighting the distance education scenario in South Africa, and investigates why distance education and particularly television broadcast-based distance education is crucial in the provision of education in developing countries in the face of the globalisation of mass communication and new information technologies.

The study also investigates the complex issues involved in the production, distribution and consumption of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* (a television programme which offers remedial support for matric (grade 12) and grade 10 to 11 students) by examining whether the producers and partners of the programme created a text which connects with the multi-cultural reality of teachers, learners and other viewers in South Africa; the role of the programme in the service of growth, reconstruction and development; why the programme is not popular among the youth; and what can be done to make it effective in enhancing teaching and learning; and the intertextuality, production and distribution of the programme.

Information on the above aspects was gathered through the scanning of relevant literature and by the use of ethnographic research procedures which included focus group interviews, in-depth interviews and participant observation.

The study established that conventional systems of education and current educational practices have fallen short of preparing citizens with a strong foundation of general education. The study therefore offers distance education not only as an alternative to conventional education delivery at secondary and higher levels of education, but also as a low-cost alternative to expanding education. Constructivism is suggested as an alternative set of values that may significantly influence learning and that can help develop the kind of citizens who can be able to function successfully in real-world contexts.

With regard to effectiveness of television broadcast-based distance education in teaching and learning, the study established that television is an effective means of achieving traditional educational goals, and that television broadcast-based distance education remains important especially in the developing countries in light of the need to increase access to education, redress the disparities caused by globalisation of mass communication and by lack of information and communication technologies.

With regard to distance education in South Africa, the study found that there is both significant policy commitment and actual use of broadcast-based distance education in solving many of the country's education problems, but that there is an urgent need to improve the quality of that provision, particularly in formal education.

On the complex issues involved in the production, distribution and the consumption of *Liberty Learning Channel programme*, the study found that the programme (aired live since 1993), is a production of Liberty Learning Channel, an independent company based in Johannesburg, in partnership with the Liberty Life Foundation, and that the SABC is not involved in the production but provided the airwaves. Each subject presenter prepares his or her own lessons, and therefore no services of producers, scriptwriters, or editors are employed in the production of the programme. The programme is then distributed through television, newspapers (the *Sowetan*), videocassettes, the Internet and in future through CD-ROMs. Additionally, the study

found that Liberty Learning Channel relies on audience feedback from audience rating and occasional feedback from comments down the streets or letters from viewers thanking the presenters. This study argues that this kind of monitoring is not sufficient as rating only tells advertisers how many viewers were exposed to a specific programme content on a particular television channel in a certain time slot.

Regarding the consumption of the programme, the great majority of the focus group participants liked the programme and used it during revision and in dealing with large numbers of students with different abilities and difficulties. A great majority of the students liked the programme because of the way the presenters explained clearly. However, a great majority of the participants watched the programme sparingly partly because the time slot was 'inappropriate' and due to a lack of awareness about the programme. Several suggestions for the improvement of the programme were put forward, amongst them: to change the time slot; to have multi-racial presenters; to give detailed timetables to schools in advance, and to advertise the programme more directly to schools. However, a reluctance or unwillingness to consider some of the audiences' suggestions for the improvement of the programme, was shown by the manager of Liberty Learning Channel, William Smith.

The above results are reported and discussed in detail in chapters 2 to 3, and general conclusions and recommendations presented in chapter 4.

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CHAPTER ONE

PART ONE

The focus of the present study

1.1. Introduction: Nature of the research problem

The crisis in education in South Africa will potentially have long-term negative impacts on the nation's development. Therefore, resolving the educational crisis on a large scale is a high priority and is the foundation for economic development (Ural, 1991: 1-2). In a geographically large country like South Africa, where the population is scattered, where economic disparities are aligned to race, where qualified teachers and specialists in certain subject areas are scarce, and where there is an illiteracy rate of 15 per cent and 14 per cent for adult¹ females and males respectively (Population Reference Bureau Data Finder, 2000; UNFPA State of World Population, 2003), much of hope is put into television broadcast-based distance education as a viable alternative to expanding formal education provision extensively and quickly (Ural, 1991: 27). Television is a powerful medium that pervades a large portion of ones daily living, and thus, hope has been expressed that television broadcast-based distance education may be a successful way to instruct a vast number of students simultaneously.

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), in partnership with various private sector enterprises, has identified the production and dissemination of educational materials as a priority (South African Institute for Distance Education, 1998). One such initiative is *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, a secondary school level and youth development programme broadcasts on SABC 3 from Monday to Friday from 10.05am to 11.30am and Saturday 09.00am to 11.30am². Liberty Learning Channel utilises materials developed by David Modlin and Real Lissos of the Learning Channel Campus, in collaboration with William Smith, a visionary teacher and pioneer of television broadcast-based distance education in

¹ Rates for women and men above 15 years of age who cannot, with understanding, both read and write a short statement on everyday life. Data is derived from estimates for the 1998-2001 period.

² The time slot for the morning weekdays broadcast was changed to 09:00am to 10:30 am from the beginning of June 2004. From mid-May 2003, adhoc airtime is given in the afternoon during the week days from 14:30pm to 16:30pm only when the SABC is not covering cricket matches or live Parliament discussions. Also an additional time slot for the Saturday broadcast was given from 12.00pm to 13:00pm (William Smith telephone interview, 11 March 2004).

South Africa, together with his band of expert teachers. Liberty Learning Channel concentrates on producing and broadcasting educational support and enrichment for classroom-based curricula education in the following subjects: English, Mathematics, Biology and Science (Liberty Life Foundation Report, 1997: 30).

This study will investigate whether television broadcast-based distance education in South Africa is working, and how successful it is in reaching its goals. A brief history of the SABC educational services since the inception of broadcasting in South Africa will be incorporated and changes affecting the corporation in terms of broadcasting policy, especially with regard to education, will be traced. The heart of the study will be an ethnographic investigation of the production, distribution and consumption of *Liberty Learning Channel programme*. This will be done by observing and recording the responses of the producers, scriptwriters and partners (The Liberty Life Foundation, The SABC, Liberty Learning Channel, teachers and students) involved in complex issues surrounding the production and the consumption of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

1.1.2. The need for the study

There are several reasons why this study is worth undertaking. First is the need for distance education in South Africa. The country has an illiteracy rate of 15 per cent and 14 per cent for adult females and males respectively (Population Reference Bureau Data Finder, 2000; UNFPA State of World Population, 2003). The planning of school-based educational broadcasting services by the SABC and the Department of Education (Butcher, 1998: 16-17), and research by Market Research Africa, supports the need for distance education in South Africa and revealed that there is a great desire to learn among the youth (Maree, 1987). Thus, there is a need to investigate the role of television broadcast-based distance education as a possibility for extending the provision of formal classroom-based education to large numbers of learners. Consequently, one needs to investigate how the SABC and Department of Education fulfil the promise of extending education.

Secondly, there are questions as to whether presenting a telecourse or mass producing learning materials for presentation at a distance is teaching (Sammons, 1989). According to Otto Peters (1983), the teacher need not teach in a personal face-to-face

mode, but rather should provide cost-effective instruction which can reach large numbers of students. Therefore, the study will embark on finding out whether television can be used to teach, the advantages of television broadcast-based distance education systems in South Africa, the obstacles to implementation of large scale television broadcast-based distance education system in South Africa, strategies for enhancing social interactivity and the reach and use of television broadcast-based distance education programmes in schools without infrastructures.

Thirdly, according to a World Bank study on education in Sub-Saharan Africa, "without education, development will not occur. Only educated people can command the skill necessary for sustainable growth and for a better quality life..." (quoted in SABC Education and the Department of Education, 1998: 14). Furthermore, educational broadcasting plays a pivotal role in the service of growth, reconstruction and development. It is not a panacea, but without it, the road would be long and uphill for South Africa (Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri, the then chairperson of the SABC in SABC Education and the Department of Education 1998: 22). In light of this, the study will examine the role of television broadcast-based distance education, in the service of growth, reconstruction and development. *Liberty Learning Channel programme* will be utilised as a case study for the purpose.

Fourthly, in light of the apparent need for television distance education, a study on audience viewership and ratings amongst 15-20 years olds showed that *Liberty Learning Channel programme* had low viewership and audience appreciation compared to drama/soap opera programmes such as *Generations*, *The Bold and the Beautiful* and *Yizo-Yizo* (AMPS, 1999, October). Thus, there is a need to investigate why *Liberty Learning Channel programme* is not popular among the youth, and what can be done to make it effective in enhancing teaching and learning.

Fifthly, there is the quest to evaluate the extent to which the producers, scriptwriters and partners in production of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, created a text which connects with the multi-cultural reality of teachers, learners and other viewers in South Africa.

Sixthly, the theory of intertextuality proposes that any one text is necessarily read in relation to others and that a range of textual knowledge is brought to bear upon it (Fiske, 1987:108). As Tony Thwaites and his colleagues note "texts are elastic, and their frames or boundaries can always be redrawn by readers" (Thwaites *et al.*, 1994³). Each text exists within a vast 'society of texts' in various genres and media. No text is an island entirely of itself. Thus, there is a need for this study to investigate the intertextuality and the distribution of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

Seventhly, the question of public service broadcasting, its future and its role is one which is very vital and relevant, particularly in South Africa. Blumer (1990: 10), describes the challenges of the public service broadcasting as lying in "the multiplicity of audience types served and audience images catered for, in respect of programme making, striving to match it to the heterogeneity of the viewing public and ensuring that each type of programming has sufficient resources to be good of its kind, and in respect of responsiveness to society. This implies that all significant sectors of the community, divided by interests, values and identities, are entitled to have their main concerns reflected in a tolerably authentic way in programme output." Using this perspective, this study aims at interrogating the role of television broadcast-based distance education and *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* in the enhancement of national and regional identity, and in the correction of imbalances in terms of access to educational opportunities.

Eighthly, the rapid changes in technology over the past decade have changed the way distance education is employed and used. The growth and impact of distance education and the opportunities it offers are directly linked to the availability of new technologies. As technology brings distant sites into an electronic web of information, people throughout the world are pulled together (Thach and Murphy, 1994). Thus, a demand for distance education opportunities is seen world-wide (Hanson *et al.*, 1996). Therefore, this study will investigate the implications of globalisation of mass communication and new information technologies on television broadcast-based distance education.

³ <http://www.aber.ac.uk/~dgc/semag.html> date accessed 20/10/1999

Ninthly, according to Tony Bates (1984: 181) there are fundamental issues about the role of broadcasting which are not addressed, and as such recur affecting the effectiveness of educational broadcasts. Two key questions are:

- why do broadcasting organisations with a commitment to education consult so little with other educational institutions and agencies?
- why is so little done to discover the specific learning needs of the target audiences and the effects of educational programmes? (Netshitomboni, 1999).

This study will investigate these questions.

Tenthly, children's responses to, and their consumption of media, remains under-researched in South Africa. The amount of time they spend watching television or listening to the radio is not monitored with any regularity, nor is the specific scheduling of their programmes analysed to determine their programming preferences (Bulbulia, 1998: 233). The most relevant research conducted by the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) into the child audience was completed in August 1997. It was the first time that 12-15 year olds were reported on in such a focused and detailed way. The SAARF research on 'tomorrow's adults' was the first of its kind to be released in 13 years. The study concluded the following: 58 per cent (2.1 million) listened to radio 'yesterday' and 85 per cent (3.1 million) in the 'last seven days'; 53 per cent (1.95 million) watched television 'yesterday' and 67 per cent (1.8 million) read any magazine 'yesterday'; 32 percent (505, 000) read any newspaper 'yesterday' (of whom 5 per cent read any daily English or Afrikaans newspaper and 12 per cent read any weekly newspaper); 12 per cent (442, 000) saw a film in a cinema in the past 12 weeks (Bulbulia, 1998: 233). It is not enough to broadcast programmes, no matter how good, regardless of the educational standards of the target audience or the reactions and environment which will make or break their impact, as is confirmed by experiments. It is realised everywhere that the needs, knowledge's and motivation of the target audience be first studied (Souchin, 1984; Nwosu, 1986). Therefore, this study sets out to elicit the different responses of students and teachers on their patterns of use, understanding, reactions and attitudes to *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* content.

Lastly, early audience research on television was undertaken within the empirical framework which conceptualised the audience as a large mass composed of isolated

and unknown individuals. That was the thinking of a group of researchers in the USA who employed a series of experimental and statistical methods in search of the 'effects' of the media. These effects were conceived of as behavioural ones subject to measurement. This Paradigm (normative paradigm) is often referred to as the 'hypodermic model' (Morley, 1992; Barker, 1997). This model has been the subject of considerable criticism. Firstly, the model concentrates on short-term behaviour rather than considering the meaning that audiences construct and deploy. Secondly, it fails to differentiate between social groups and the meanings they bring to television of consumption. As Williams (1961) remarked, "there are no masses, only ways of seeing people as masses". Above all, the research failed to demonstrate the expected effects of television (Barker, 1997). Stuart Hall (1982: 61) pointed out that, 'effects studies' confined themselves to immediately observable changes in human behaviour and left the formal structure of media output wholly untheorised. They were also unable to deal with the wider affectivity of economic and cultural processes (Moore, 1995: 5).

The present study argues that early audience research did not give a clear understanding of the complexities of television and its audiences and suggests that audience research based on an active audience paradigm is the key to understanding television and its audiences. In this regard, this study employs ethnographic audience response theory (Morley, 1992: 183; Brown, 1994: 73; Moore, 1995: 3), to understand the production, distribution and consumption of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* (a detailed examination of early audience research and most recent developments in audience research is offered in Chapter one section 1.1.4.1 and Chapter one section 1.1.4.2 for ethnographic audience response theory).

1.1.3. Research questions to be answered in the present study

It is the intention of the present study to answer the following questions: 1) What is the potential for distance education to impact upon the massification of education? What is the context of distance education in South Africa and what is the success rate of the SABC educational broadcasting department in catering for the formal educational needs? Indicators of success are for example, the number of formal educational programmes aired by SABC and how well they are integrated into the mainstream school curriculum. What is the role of television broadcast-based distance

education and *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* in the service of economic growth, reconstruction and development? What is the role of television broadcast-based distance education and *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* in enhancement of national and regional identity, and the correction of imbalances in terms of access to educational opportunities?

2) What is the history of the SABC education and partnership intervention in television broadcast-based distance education? Is there a current initiative for television broadcast-based distance education in South Africa, and what are the advantages and obstacles to the implementation of large-scale television broadcast-based distance education? What is the relationship between education and the industry? How can television broadcast-based distance education be made to reach and be of use to schools without basic infrastructure?

3) What forms of television broadcast-based distance education are aired by the SABC in support of formal education? What is the historical development of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* and television broadcast-based distance education in South Africa? Does *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* use intertextuality and to what extent does it use intertextuality? That is, are there print or electronic materials to support the broadcast? And how are the programmes and other support materials distributed through schools?

4) How is *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* used? Do teachers and students use or watch *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, and how? Do they integrate it into teaching programmes and build it into lessons or do they use it as a supplement or fill in activity? What are the patterns of usage or viewing of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*? Do teachers and students watch it at home or school, and do they watch live broadcasts, recorded programmes or do they use the *Sowetan* newspaper supplement? What are the factors influencing teachers and students to use *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*?

5) How effective is *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* as a television broadcast-based distance education in teaching and learning? What are the teachers and students attitudes and reactions to the presentation style, mode of address and grasp of the programme content? Does *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* advance the

argument for distance education through mass media? Can this programme be used as a vehicle to promote the implementation of curriculum 2005, now curriculum 2021⁴? Is the programme in any way relevant to the social realities of the students and the teachers? How can television broadcast-based distance education as a delivery technology, be made effective and efficient in promoting and enhancing learning? The following indicators of success of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* will include: subjective qualitative students and teachers regard of the programme and how well the programme is integrated into the mainstream school curriculum.

6) What are the implications of globalisation of mass communications and the new information technology on television broadcast-based distance education?

1.1.4. Theoretical foundations of this study

Before embarking on the theoretical underpinnings of this study, it was imperative to map out earlier and recent developments in television audience research, as this would help in understanding the theoretical underpinnings of the present study.

1.1.4.1. Early television audience research and the more recent developments in television audience research

As mentioned earlier, early audience research into the television was undertaken within the empirical framework, which conceptualised the audience as a large mass composed of isolated and unknown individuals. This normative paradigm is often referred to as the ‘hypodermic model’ (Morley, 1992; Barker, 1997). This model has been the subject of considerable criticism (see Chapter one section 1.1.2. for criticisms levelled at the ‘hypodermic model’).

Despite the criticisms levelled at the normative paradigm, there remains a significant attachment amongst some television researchers to a numerical approach. Thus ‘ratings’, so important to television organisations in their quest to measure and control audiences and attract advertising revenue, are constructed using a mixture of surveys, diaries and electronic ‘people-meters’ to give increasingly sophisticated mathematical representations of audience behaviour. These represent the efforts made by advertisers

⁴ Curriculum 2005 was renamed 2021 after the Department of Education foresaw that it was not

and programme producers to track and shape the audience as part of an ongoing form of surveillance (Barker, 1997). Ratings is an entrenched research practice based upon the assumption that it is possible to determine the objective size of the 'television audience'. It is grounded upon a straightforward behaviourist epistemology. Audience ratings tell how many viewers were exposed to specific programme content on particular TV channels in certain time slots. The measure of exposure is often assumed to indicate an act of choice in which an individual selects from a range of available programming (Webster and Wagschlag, 1985). Less modestly interpreted, exposure is assumed to imply attention to television, programme preference or acceptance and even an effect on the viewer. Quite often the ratings serve as the prime criterion of TV advertising effect (Schulz, 2000: 115).

If a programme has high ratings it is assumed to have met the viewers' needs and interests, which is one criterion of responsiveness and accountability of a television channel (Mitchell and Blumler, 1994). More often, high ratings are regarded as an indication of economic success, particularly from the standpoint of a commercial channel which is catering for a specific segment of the audience market (Schulz, 2000). In ratings, 'watching television' is defined implicitly as a simple, one-dimensional and purely objective and isolatable act. As Todd Gitlin has rightly remarked in relation to the electronic setmeter; "the numbers only sample sets tuned in, not necessarily shows watched, let alone grasped, remembered, loved, learned from, deeply anticipated, or mildly tolerated" (1983: 54; see also Morley, 1990: 6-7; Eco, 1993: 99; Hagen, 1999: 142; Hôijer, 1999: 180). More generally, the statistical perspective of audience measurement inevitably leads to emphasising averages, regularities and generalisable patterns rather than particularities, idiosyncrasies and surprising exceptions. What all this amounts to is the construction of a kind of streamlined map of the 'television audience', on which individual viewers are readable in terms of their resemblance to a 'typical' consumer whose 'viewing behaviour' can be objectively and unambiguously classified.

Recent changes in the structure of television provision as a result of the introduction of new television technologies such as cable, satellite and the video cassette recorder (VCR), have thrown this assumption of measurability of the television audience into

possible to implement curriculum 2005 to all the grades by 2005 (Grey, 2000).

severe crisis. The problem is both structural and cultural. It is related to the fact that 'watching television' is generally domestic consumer practice, and as such not at all the one-dimensional, and therefore measurable type of behaviour it hitherto has been presumed. For example, the proliferation of channels has dramatised acutely the problems inherent in the diary technique of audience measurement. Suddenly the built-in subjective (and thus unreliable) element of the diary technique was perceived as an unacceptable deficiency. David Poltrack, vice president of research for CBS, one of the three major US networks, voiced the problem as follows:

It used to be easy. You watched *MASH* on Monday night and you'd put that in the diary. Now, if you have thirty channels on cable you watch one channel, switch to a movie, watch a little MTV, then another programme, and next morning with all that switching all over the place you can't remember what you watched (quoted in Bedell Smith, 1985 cited in Ang, 1991).

Generally, agreement grew within the industry that possibilities of 'channel switching and zapping' (swiftly 'grazing' through different channels by using the remote control devices) had made the diary an obsolete measurement tool. The videocassette recorder has also played a major destabilising role in the measurability of the television audience. 'Time shifting' and 'zipping' (fast-forwarding commercials when playing back a taped programme) threatened to deregulate the carefully composed television schedules of the networks. This phenomenon has come to be called 'schedule cannibalisation' (cf. Rosenthal, 1987), a voracious metaphor that furtively indicates the apprehension, if not the implicit regret, felt in network circles about the new freedoms viewers have acquired through the VCR. 'Zipping', 'zapping', 'time shifting' and so on, are only the most obvious and most recognised tactical manoeuvres viewers engage in order to construct their own television experience. There are many other ways of doing so, ranging from doing other things (Taylor and Mullan, 1986; Gunter and Svennevig, 1987; Morley, 1990: 7) while watching to churning out cynical comments on what's on the screen.

As a result, it can no longer be conveniently assumed, as has been the foundational logic and the strategic pragmatics of traditional audience measurement, that having the television on, equals watching, that watching means paying attention to the screen, that watching a programme implies watching the commercials inserted in it, that watching the commercials leads to actually buying the products being advertised. It is

important to note that no matter how sophisticated the measurement technology, television consumption can never be completely 'domesticated' in the classificatory grid of ratings research. This is because television consumption is, despite its habitual character, dynamic rather than static, experiential rather than merely behavioural. It is a complex practice that is more than just an activity that can be broken down into simple and objectively measurable variables. It is full of casual, unforeseen and indeterminate moments which inevitably make for the ultimate unmeasurability of how television is used in the context of everyday life (Morley, 1990).

In the face of growing demand for more accurate and more detailed information about television consumption, technological innovations in audience measurement procedures are still stubbornly seen as the best hope to get more accurate information about television consumption. Nevertheless, the tremendous excitement about the prospect of having such single-source, multi-variable information, which is typically celebrated by researchers as an opportunity of 'recapturing ...intimacy with the consumer' (Gold, 1988: 24) or getting in touch with 'real persons' (Davis, 1986: 51), indicates the increasing discontent with ordinary ratings statistics alone as signifiers for the value of the audience commodity.

Statistical figures that estimate audience size suggest the ultimate possibility of defining the television audience as a unified totality. This kind of empirical audience measurement (favoured by television institutions) which defines the television audiences as individual persons and disregards the diverse social and cultural contexts in which viewing occurs is an effort to stabilise 'the television audience' which is made up of inherently unstable identities, as Ien Ang points out in the following:

The identities of actual audiences are inherently unstable, they are dynamic and variable formations of people whose cultural and psychological boundaries are essentially uncertain. The social world of actual audiences is therefore a fundamentally fluid, fuzzy and elusive reality, whose description can never be contained and exhausted by any totalising definition of 'television audiences'...institutionally produced discursive constructions of 'television audience' are strategic structurations of which are under constant pressure of reconstruction whenever they turn out to be imperfect weapons in the quest for control (Ang, 1991: 41; see also Ang, 1990; Morley, 1992).

According to John Fiske, “people watching television are best modelled according to a multitude of differences” (Fiske, 1994). The kind of quantitative statistical data gathered by television institutions does not account for differences or individuality among television viewers. More emphasis is needed on context of viewing and on television as an aspect of a whole range of everyday practices (Scannel, 1988).

Another common method of quantitative audience research is the social survey. As with survey techniques more generally, statistical tabulations can tell us about who has bought what, not what meanings those products have for those buying them, nor how those products are used in the practice of everyday life. While far from useless, the survey can only paint a static quantitative picture of who consumes what; it cannot offer a vibrant, qualitative picture of how something is consumed and what meanings are produced through those processes of consumption. As the cultural theorist Michel de Certeau argued, the survey approach utilised by producers can only count ‘what is used’, not the ways of using. Paradoxically, the latter becomes invisible in the universe of codification (De Certeau, 1984: 35).

Although survey work is useful in that it provides an excellent skeleton, so to speak, on which to build further research, it lacks flesh and blood (Gillespie, 1995: 52). Marie Gillespie explains why the social survey method of audience research has declined in popularity:

In recent years, the survey method has been most unfashionable among academic audience researchers who have generally expressed increasing preference for the use of qualitative method. It is dismissed as positivist, empiricist and lacking in explanatory power. It is also criticised for being unable to address questions of ‘meaning’. Since the researcher is unable to tap into the subjective meanings held individually or collectively, it is argued that the questionnaire is not understood and answered by everyone in the same way, that it is rigid and closed method of data collection (Gillespie, 1995: 52-53).

Gillespie is of the opinion “that quantitative survey methods are ideally suited to the purpose of establishing broad patterns of media consumption and taste, if used in conjunction with more qualitative methods” (Gillespie, 1995: 52). The social survey “counts people as units” which can be measured “not as integral parts of and agents of systems and relationships” (Gillespie, 1995: 52). In other words, they do not provide the full ethnographic picture. Gillespie points out that although the survey can hardly

deal with the complexity of social processes, and is limited by the kind of information it can extract, many of its inherent flaws can be overcome when it is combined with qualitative methods (see Gillespie, 1995).

An enormous number of quantitative studies have been produced in recent years, based on the simplistic notion of the effects of television on its viewers and on the 'uses and gratifications' approach. These studies are "insistent on proving the researcher's neutrality and objectivity, but they have proven quite inadequate to the task of understanding television viewing" (Seiter *et al.*, 1994: 2), as they disregard the social contexts of viewing (Ang, 1991; Morley, 1992) in their pursuit of positivist social science. "As ways of comprehending the lived experiences of actual audiences, these methods would be doomed to failure" (Moore, 1995: 3).

A revised sociological perspective (the interpretative paradigm) made inroads into communication research. The interpretative paradigm puts into question what had always been assumed as shared and stable systems of values among all the members of the society, by its assertion that the meaning of a particular action cannot be taken for granted, but must be seen as problematic for the actors involved. Interaction thus was conceptualised as a process of interpretation and of mutual typification by and of the actors involved in a given situation. It emphasised the role of language and symbols, everyday communication, the interpretation of action, and an emphasis on the process of 'making sense' in interaction (Morley, 1992: 51). Whereas the normative approach had focused on individual actions exclusively as the reproduction of shared stable norms, the interpretative model, in its ethno-methodological form, conceived each interaction as the 'production' of a new reality. The problem here was often that although ethno-methodology could shed an interesting light on micro-processes of interpersonal communications, this was disconnected from any notion of institutional power or structural relations of class and politics (Morley, 1992: 51).

Aspects of the interactionist perspective were later taken over by the Centre for Mass Communication Research at Leicester University, and the terms in which its then director, James Halloran, discussed the social effects of television gave some idea of its distance from the normative paradigm. He spoke of the

Trend away from...the emphasis on the viewer as *tabularasa*... just waiting to soak up all that is beamed at him. Now we think in terms of interaction or

exchange between the medium and audience, and it is recognised that the viewer approaches every viewing situation with a complicated piece of filtering equipment (Halloran, 1970a: 20).

The empirical work of the Leicester Centre at this time marked an important shift in research from behavioural analysis to cognitive analysis (Morley, 1992). The realisation with mass-media research that one cannot approach the problems of 'effects' of the media on the audience as if contents impinged directly on passive minds, that people in fact assimilate, select from and reject communications from the media, led to the development of the 'uses and gratifications model' (Morley, 1992: 51).

The 'uses and gratification model' was developed by Blumler and Katz (1975 quoted in de Beer, 1998). It has its origins in psychology, more specifically, in the analysis of human motivation. It suggests that viewers, listeners and readers actively use mass communication along with other sources in their community to gratify particular needs and reach their goals (see also Davidson and Yu, 1974: 15; Severin and Tankard, 1992: 269). According to this approach, the following assumptions are made about the media and media users: members of the audience actively link themselves to certain media to satisfy specific goals and to gain gratification. Thus, the use of the media is goal directed; the media compete with other resources of information and entertainment in order to satisfy the needs of the audience; audiences are able to alter the media in such a way that their needs are more easily met; and audiences are also aware of their needs and can therefore offer specific reasons for using a particular medium. The following four main kinds of needs can be identified: diversion (escape from routine and the burdens of day to day problems, relaxation, fantasy and imagination); personal relationships (companionship and mediated social contacts); personal identity (personal references, values, exploration of reality, role models); and surveillance (need for information, keep up to date, provision of subjects for conversation) (de Beer, 1998: 21).

The 'uses and gratifications' approach highlights the important fact that different members of the mass-media audience may use and interpret any particular programme in quite different ways from how the communicator intended it, and in quite different ways from other members of the audience (main interest tends to fall on individual differences in the interpretation of messages). Rightly, it stresses the role of the

audience in the construction of meaning (Morley, 1992: 51-52). However, this 'uses and gratifications model' suffers from fundamental defects in at least two respects: 1) as Stuart Hall (1973a) argues, in terms of its overestimation of 'openness' of the message. Polysemy must not be confused with pluralism. Any society/culture tends, with varying degrees of closure, to impose its segmentation, its classifications of the world upon its members. There remains a dominant cultural order, though it is neither unvoiced nor uncontested (Hall, 1973a: 13; Moores, 1995: 7). While messages can potentially sustain more than one reading, "there can be no law to ensure that the receiver will 'take' the preferred or dominant reading of an episode...in precisely the way in which it has been encoded by the producer" (Hall, 1973a).

As Phillip Elliot rightly argues, one fundamental flaw in the 'uses and gratifications' approach is that it fails to take into account the fact that television consumption is:

More a matter of availability than of selection...(in this sense) availability depends on familiarity...that audience has easier access to familiar genres partly because they understand the language and conventions and also because they already know the social meaning of this type of output with some certainty (Elliot, 1973: 21).

Similarly, John Downing has pointed to the limitations of the assumption of an unstructured mass of 'differential interpretations' of media messages. As he points out, while in principle a given 'content' may be interpreted by the audience in a variety of ways,

In practice very few of these views will be distributed throughout the vast majority of the population, with the remainder to be found only in a small minority. [For] given a set of cultural norms and values which are very dominant in the society as a whole (say the general undesirability of strikes) and given certain stereotypes (say that workers and /or unions initiate strikes) only a very sustained and carefully argued and documented presentation of any given strike is likely to challenge these values and norms (Downing, 1974: 111 quoted in Morley, 1992: 52-52).

The second limitation of the 'uses and gratifications' perspective lies in its insufficiently sociological psychological problematic, relying as it does on mental states, needs and processes abstracted from the social situation of the individuals concerned. In this sense the 'modern' 'uses and gratifications' approach is less 'sociological' than earlier attempts to apply this framework in the USA. The earlier studies dealt with specific types of content and audiences, while 'modern' 'uses and

gratifications' tend to look for underlying structures of need and gratification of psychological origin, without effectively situating these within any socio-historical framework (Morley, 1992; Morley, 1994: 17; Moores, 1995: 7). As Phillip Elliot argues, the 'intra-individual' processes with which uses and gratification research deals, can be generalised to aggregates of individuals, but they cannot be converted in any meaningful way into social structures and process (Elliot, 1973: 6). This is because the audience here is still conceived of as an atomised mass of individuals (just as in the earlier 'stimulus-response' model), abstracted from the groups and subcultures which provide a framework of meaning for their activities.

The above point argues for the essentially social nature of consciousness as it is formed through language in much the way that Valentin Voloshinov does:

Signs emerge after all, only in the process of interaction between one individual consciousness and another. And the individual consciousness itself is filled with signs. Consciousness becomes consciousness only once it has been filled with ideological (semiotic) content, consequently only in the process of social interaction (quoted in Woolfson, 1976: 168).

As Charles Woolfson remarks of this, the sign is here as vehicle of social communication, and as permeating the individual consciousness, so that consciousness is seen as a socio-ideological fact. Thus, utterances are to be examined not as individual, idiosyncratic expressions of a psychological kind, but as sociologically regulated, both by the immediate social situation and by the surrounding socio-historical context; utterances from a 'ceaseless stream of dialogic inter-change (which is the) generative process of a given social collective (Woolfson, 1976: 172). Here Woolfson argues for the need to redefine the analysis of 'individuals' speech utterances as the analysis of the communicative utterances of 'social individuals'. One needs to break fundamentally with the 'uses and gratifications' approach, its psychologistic problematic and its emphasis on individual differences of interpretation. Of course, there will always be individual, private readings, but one needs to investigate the extent to which these individual readings are patterned into cultural structures and clusters (Morley, 1992).

David Morley (1992: 80) argued that it is not a question of the different psychologies of individuals, but is also a question of differences between individuals involved in different sub-cultures, with different socio-economic backgrounds. That is to say,

while of course there will always be individual differences in how people interpret a particular message, those individual differences might well turn out to be framed by cultural differences. Murdock makes this point well:

In order to provide anything like a satisfactory account of the relationship between people's mass media involvement's and their own social situation and meaning system, it is necessary to start from the social setting rather than from the individual; to replace the idea of personal 'needs' with the notion of structural contradictions; and to introduce the concept of sub-cultures. Sub-cultures are the meaning system and modes of expression developed by groups in particular parts of the social structure in the course of the collective attempt to come to terms with the contradictions in their shared social situations; more particularly, sub-cultures represent the accumulated meanings and means of expression through which groups in subordinate structural positions have attempted to negotiate or oppose the dominant meaning system. Therefore, provide a pool of available symbolic resources which particular individuals or groups can draw on in their attempt to make sense of their own specific situation and construct a viable identity (Murdock, 1973: 213-14 quoted in Morley, 1992: 81).

What is needed for audience research is an approach which links differential interpretations back to the socio-economic structure of society, showing how members of different groups and classes, sharing different 'cultural codes' will interpret a given message differently, not just at the personal, idiosyncratic level, but in a way systematically related to their socio-economic position. The audience must be conceived of as being composed of clusters of socially situated individual readers, whose individual readings will be framed by shared cultural formations and practices pre-existent to individual, shared cultural 'orientations' which will in turn be determined by factors derived from the objective position of the individual reader in the class structure. These objective factors must be seen as setting parameters to individual experience, although not 'determining' consciousness in a mechanistic way, people understand their situation and react to it through the level of sub-cultures and meaning systems (Morley, 1992: 54).

A different theoretical account of the 'active' audience can be found within 'cultural studies', most obviously within the encoding/decoding model developed by Stuart Hall (1981). Hall perceives the process of television encoding as an articulation of linked but distinct moments: production, circulation, distribution, which has its specific practice which is necessary to the circuit but does not guarantee the next moment. In particular, the production of meaning does not ensure consumption of that

meaning as the encoders might have intended because television messages constructed as a sign system with multi-accentuated components are polysemic. In short, television messages carry multiple meanings and can be interpreted in different ways. That is not to say that all the meanings are equal among themselves. Rather the text will be 'structured in dominance' leading to a 'preferred meaning'. The audience is conceived of as composed of clusters of socially-situated individuals whose readings will be framed by shared cultural meanings and practices and to the degree that these frameworks are also those of the encoders, then the audience will decode the messages within the same frameworks (Barker, 1997).

The encoding/decoding model stresses the audience's potential to respond actively and even argumentatively to the messages of the media. Because all audiences bring to their viewing those other discourses and sets of representations with which they are in contact in other areas of their lives, the message that they receive from the media do not confront them in isolation. Audiences intersect with explicit and implicit messages they have received from other institutions, people they know, or sources of information they trust. Unconsciously, audiences sift and compare messages from one place with those received from another. Thus, how audiences respond to messages from the media depends precisely on the extent to which they fit with, or possibly contradict that which they have come across in other areas of their lives (Morley, 1992: 76-77). A different way of looking at how audience interact with messages is provided by Hall, after Frank Parkin (1971), a model of three hypothetical decoding positions: a dominant-hegemonic encoding/decoding, a negotiated code (which acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic in the abstract but makes its own rules and adaptations under particular circumstances and an oppositional code in which people may understand the preferred encoding but reject it and decode in contrary ways (Barker, 1997: 117). The meaning or 'reading' of the programme generated by the viewer then depends both on how the programme has been structured by the broadcasters and on what codes of interpretation the viewer brings with him or her to the text.

It was against the background of the 'effects theory' and the 'uses and gratifications' paradigm that the Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model of communication was developed as an attempt to develop insights which had come out of other perspectives

(see Morley, 1994). Hall's model challenged the idea that it is possible to determine the nature of communication and meaning by the application of measurement techniques. It insisted that meaning is multi-layered/multi-referential and as such imports the then new fields of semiotics and structuralism into the study of mass communication (Gray, 1999: 27). Hall's model offered a way beyond the current 'uses and gratifications' approach by insisting that audiences share certain frameworks of understanding and interpretation. Reading is not simply the lonely uses and gratifications individual, it is shared (Gray, 1999).

The encoding/decoding model suggested by Hall created a series of empirical studies about the reception of television programmes by different audiences. The first one was David Morley's *The Nationwide audience* (1980a), which brought together the 'constructed text' (Brunsdon and Morley, 1978), with its perceived preferred reading, and the 'interpreting groups of readers' with their 'determinations'. The nationwide study sought to combine textual construction and interpretation, granted viewers interpretive status (but always within shaping structural determinations) and developed ways of conceiving of the audience as socially structured, suggesting that decoding is not homogeneous. Thus, the text and audience are conceptualised within and as part of the social structure organised in and across power relations of dominant and subordinate groups, of which media were seen to be occupying a crucial position and role.

Although the viewer was considered to be interpreting specific programmes in different ways, these were not entirely and absolutely open to the viewers. She or he was limited, shaped by her or his own social positioning as well as the limitations and closures of the text itself (Gray, 1999: 27-28). The encoding/decoding model, although it examines the social and cultural context of the audience, remains a limited model in the sense that "it simply provides for the logical possibilities of the receiver either sharing the codes in which the message is sent and therefore, to that extent, being likely to make a dominant, negotiated or oppositional decoding of the encoded message" (Morley, 1994: 18; Alasuutari, 1999). There was limited value in inquiring how viewing groups selected by the researcher decoded a television programme without first establishing whether those people would usually be watching at all. A sense of the social patterning of tastes and preferences was required. The other

important shortcoming of Morley's study was its failure to deal with the social settings in which consumption normally takes place: the immediate physical and interpersonal contexts of daily media reception. In the case of television, entry into the domestic realm of family viewing was needed if one is to see how contexts shape interpretations and choices (Morley, 1990: 7).

In summary, there has been a resurgence of interest in audience research since 1980 driven by the active audience paradigm, and although there are theoretical differences between writers in the field, discernible trends can be identified: from a concern with the general to an interest in the particular; from a concern with numbers to a concern with meaning; from viewing the text as having a single meaning to seeing multiple meanings in it; from concentration on the text to a focus on the audience; from seeing the audience as an undifferentiated broad mass to trying to understand the specificity's of particular audiences under definite circumstances; and from a conception of the audience as passive to a notion of the active audience. These are the general theoretical stances of the active audience paradigm (Barker, 1997: 118).

The most recent development in audience theory is the notion of ethnographic audience response theory, which employs the in-depth interviews, as opposed to the impersonal questionnaire. In its qualitative investigation of the television audience, "traditional models of research have failed to approximate the lived experiences of audiences and to deliver the kinds of insights required to understand the complexities of television and its audiences embedded in wide social, political and economic contexts" (Gillespie, 1995: 53-54). Ethnography has been appropriated by audience researchers from anthropology, and it has been "championed as a research practice capable of overcoming the impasse of many audience studies" (Gillespie, 1995: 54). It should be understood that ethnographies cannot magically give us direct and unmediated access to the real, which the ratings discourse cannot, as ethnographies are discourses too. What they do have however, is a greater potential for engaging with the production of meaning in everyday life (see Moores, 1995). Therefore, it is this theory of audience research which will be utilised in this study. Ethnographic methods will be utilised to study the intertextuality of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, since it allows the researcher to comprehend texts at a deeper level, and make intertextual links (Hoesterey, 1987; Vosniadou and Brewer, 1987).

The theory of intertextuality proposes that any one text is necessarily read in relation to others and that a range of textual knowledge's is brought to bear upon it (Fiske, 1987: 108). Studying a text's intertextual relationship can provide one with valuable clues to the readings that a particular culture or subculture is likely to produce from it. Vertical intertextuality consists of a primary text's relation with other texts which refer specifically to it. These secondary texts, such as criticism or publicity, work to promote the circulation of selective meanings of the primary text. The tertiary texts lead us on to the third level of the intertextuality of television. These are the texts that the viewers themselves make out of their responses, which circulate orally or in letters to the press and which work to form a collective rather than an individual response. These then read into the programme as textual activators. These third level texts form much of the data of the ethnographic study of audiences. They are ethno-semiological data (Katz and Liebes, 1985: 189). They can be 'public', such as letters to the papers or the results of opinion polls, or 'private', such as the conversation between members of the family, or gossip between friends. Finally they can be somewhere in between, such as the responses given to researchers like Morley (1980a), Hobson (1982), Ang (1985) and Katz and Liebes (1984, 1985). Studying these responses can give one insight into how the primary and secondary texts are read and circulated in the culture of the viewers (Fiske, 1987: 124). Reading the secondary and tertiary texts can also help one see how the primary text can be articulated into general culture in different ways, by different readers in different subcultures (Fiske, 1987: 117). In this study, all the above aspects of intertextually will be studied in connection with *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

The next part of the study will interrogate the theoretical bases of this study, which are ethnographic audience response theory, constructivism and the circuit of culture. Each of these theories will be discussed separately as indicated below.

1.1.4.2. Ethnographic Audience Response Theory

Ethnographic audience research offers a means of gaining greater insight into the way people watch what they do, and why. Unlike quantitative audience research, it acts as a method of cultural investigation, as it takes into account the social world of actual

audiences (see Moores, 1995: 3). It assumes audiences use and interact with television and other popular forms of entertainment in a variety of ways, depending on intercultural, social, class, race and age variables (Brown, 1994: 73; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1993: 125). The aim of ethnographic audience studies is to “examine the dynamics of action and constraint in the daily activities and practices of individual and groups who are engaged in the socially situated production and consumption of meaning” (Morley, 1992: 183). Ethnographic audience study “acknowledges the differences between people despite their social construction, and pluralises the meanings and pleasures that they find in television. It thus contradicts theories that stress the singularity of televisions meanings and its readings” (Fiske, 1994: 63). Essentially ethnography is qualitative and is usually carried out in the form of in-depth interviews with a small number of people, and may also be supplemented with some kind of participant observation (see section Chapter one part two section 1.2 on the ethnographic methodologies utilised in this study). This type of qualitative empirical research is now recognised by many as one of the most adequate ways to learn about the differentiated subtleties of people’s engagements with television and other media (see Ang, 1994).

Shaun Moores points out that “although the use of ethnography in media studies as a method of investigating the social world of actual audiences may still be relatively new, there is a long history of such work in the discipline of anthropology and sociology” (Moores, 1995: 5). There are remarkably few empirical audience studies within the interdisciplinary fields of media, communication and cultural studies. This is made obvious by the constant referencing of a few studies in every discussion of audience work. These would include Ang’s (1985) on *Dallas*, Hobson’s (1982) on *Crossroads*, Morley’s *Nationwide* study (1980a) and *Family Television* (1986), Buckingham’s (1987) work on children viewing, Lull’s (1990) study of family television viewing, Seiter *et al.*, (1989) on soap opera audiences, Sut Shalley and Justin Lewis (1992) on *the Cosby show*, and Katz and Liebes (1985) studies of cross-cultural readings of *Dallas*. Other studies regularly cited which do not deal with broadcast media are Janice Radway’s *Reading the Romance* (1984), Joke Hermes’ *Reading Women’s Magazines* (1995) and Anna Gray’s study of the use of video recorders in the home, *Video Playtime* (1995). Added to these international studies are studies which have been carried out by the researchers colleagues at the Graduate

Programme in Culture, Communication and Media Studies, University of Natal, Durban (now University of KwaZulu-Natal), South Africa. This includes the works of Michelle Tager (1995) on *the Bold and the Beautiful*; Tager (2002) on *the Bold and Beautiful* and *Generation: A comparative ethnographic audience study of Zulu-speaking students living in residences on the University of Natal's Durban campus*; and the work of Dorothy Roome (1997) on *Transformation and Reconciliation: 'Simunye', a Flexible Model*; and Roome (1998) on *Homour as 'Cultural Reconciliation' in South African Situation Comedy: An Ethnographic Study of Multicultural Female Viewers*.

The striking thing about these studies is the repetition of the broad parameters of their findings. These can be summarised as follows. Firstly, the audience is conceived of as an active and knowledgeable producer of meaning not a product of a structured text. Secondly those meanings are bounded by the way the text is structured and by the domestic and cultural context of the viewing. Thirdly, audiences need to be understood in the contexts in which they watch television both in terms of meaning construction and the routines of daily life. Fourthly, audiences are able to distinguish between fiction and reality indeed they actively play with the boundaries, they move in and out of degrees of involvement and distance and engagement and inattention. Fifthly, the process of meaning construction and the place of television in the routines of daily life alter from culture to culture and in terms of gender and class within the same cultural community (Barker, 1997: 136-137; Schulz, 2000: 121-122).

The new approach to audience studies also saw a broader range of contributing factors in the viewing process being included and investigated. Notions that the researcher found particularly useful for the purpose of this study, are those of constructivism (Bartlett, 1932; Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978) and the 'circuit of culture' (Mackay, 1997: 1). Each notion and how it informed this study is discussed below.

1.1.4.3. Constructivism

The roots of constructivism can be found in the assertion that individuals do not store verbatim representations of reality, but during recall, actually construct knowledge (Bartlett, 1932). Jean Piaget (1973) defined this as the notion of equilibration, while Lev Vygotsky (1978) introduced the idea of social construction of knowledge. Knowledge is presented as explicitly being constructed, both personally and in

interaction with others as well as the physical world (Jonassen, 1991; Strommen and Bruce, 1992). These theorists hold that learning is an active process (Pressley, Harris and Marks, 1992 quoted in Harris and Graham, 1994; Perkins, 1999), during which one constructs reality from one's own experiences. Whatever one learns cannot be independent of the context in which it was learned and what one already knows (Dewey, 1938; Piaget, 1963, 1969; Duffy *et al.*, 1991; Spiro *et al.*, 1991; Brooks and Brooks, 1993; Palincsar and Klenk, 1993 quoted in Harris & Graham, 1994; Reid, 1993 quoted in Harris and Graham 1994; William and Doll, 1993; Jaramillo, 1996; Geelan, 1997; Windschitl, 1999).

Central to Vygotsky's (1978) theory is the notion that human development is inseparable from social and cultural activities. According to Vygotsky, children's development of higher mental processes involves learning to use the inventions of society, that is, the tools of culture, such as language and mathematics, through the assistance and guidance of other people who are more skilled in the use of these tools (Rogoff and Morelli, 1989). Thus, Vygotsky suggests that while children actively construct an understanding of their own world, they also benefit from guided interactions with more skilled partners, be they adults or peers. In other words, children learn through 'scaffolding', Vygotsky's term for assisted interaction or guided participation (Rogoff, 1986). This interaction is a means by which children become enculturated in the use of the intellectual tools of their society, such as language. Social encounters in a variety of concepts lead to understanding and self-regulation (Stremmel, Fu, and Stone, 1991).

Vygotsky advocated that teachers should recognise the potential contributions that students can make when designing curricula and class activities to serve student needs. This is evident in Vygotsky's 'zone of proximal development', which is not limited to a one-way teacher-centred approach towards teaching and curricula development. For example, studies undertaken by researchers, such as Rogoff (1989 quoted in Jaramillo, 1996), who used the Vygotsky approach, indicated that young children not only influence one another but influence the adults who are in turn attempting to socialise them (Tudge, 1990). Students benefit by working in small groups with peers which means they can exchange feedback, ask each other queries,

and explain their strategies. Students likewise benefit because they can clarify their thinking, discuss misconceptions, and are rarely remain sitting and waiting for an instructor. Students develop better skills of co-operation, communication, exploration and conceptual development (Jaramillo, 1996). Thus, a student's development cannot be understood by a study of the individual; we must also examine the external social world in which that individual's life developed (Jaramillo, 1996; Perkins, 1999). In this study, the notion of active learners or audience, prior knowledge and the fact that social happenings shape what is learned was crucial in understanding how teachers, students and presenters of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* interact in the production, distribution and consumption of the programme.

1.1.4.4. The Circuit of Culture

The circuit is shown in a diagrammatical form below:

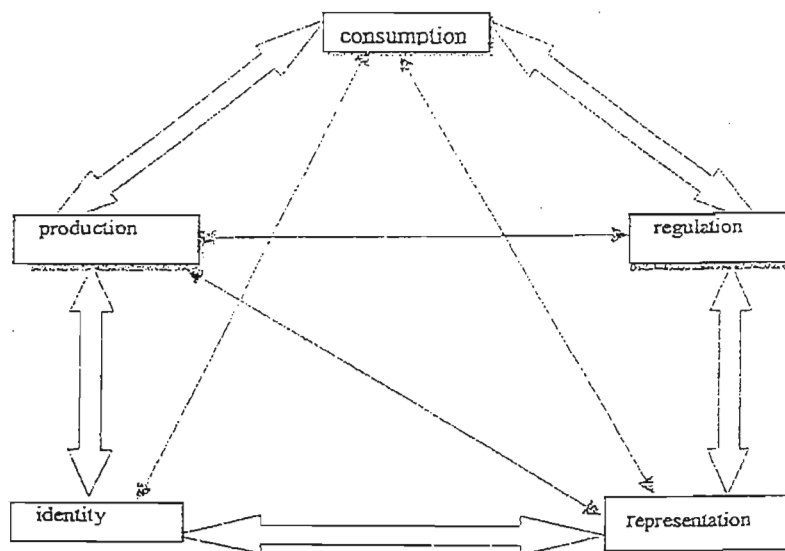


Figure One: The circuit of culture

The “circuit of culture” is a model of culture ¹ (Du Gay, 1997). Culture is studied as both a whole ways of life and as the production and circulation of meaning. The circuit of culture demonstrates a process whereby culture gathers meaning at five different ‘moments’; representation, identity, production, consumption, and

regulation. Each of these 'moments' is interlinked with the other 'moments' in an on-going process of cultural encoding and dissemination. One major strength of this model is that it focuses the attention, not only on these 'moments' where power and culture meet, allowing meaning to be shared, but also on the links between 'moments', where culture is mediated. Stuart Hall refers to this process as 'articulation', the bridging of the gap between 'moments' of the circuit. These gaps are populated by what Pierre Bourdieu (1993) refers to as 'cultural intermediaries'; by this he seems to mean people in the profession of advertising, marketing, design and in his later work, notably *On Television* (1998) identifies journalists. However, it seems logical to apply this term to everyone involved in cultural production or reception. This model of culture is used to guide this study as Paul Du Gay's (1997) comment that this is the circuit "through which any analysis of a cultural text or artifact must pass if it is to be adequately studied".

Liberty Learning Channel Programme is cultural because South Africans have constituted it as meaningful. People can talk, think and imagine it. It is also cultural because it is associated with a set of social practices (like schooling, learning and studying, watching for revision, watching to learn something new and to fill-in gaps) which are specific to people's way of life or culture. It is cultural because it is associated with kinds of people (students, youth and knowledge seekers), with certain places or spaces (classroom and home) and it has a social profile or identity (how various groups and types of people came to be associated with *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*). It is also cultural because it frequently appears in and is represented within South African's visual languages and media communications (Du Gay, 1997: 10-11). The emphasis on cultural practices is important. It is participants in a culture who give meaning to people, objects and events. Things 'in themselves' rarely if ever have any one, single, fixed and unchanging meaning (Hall, 1977: 3). In part people give objects, people and events meaning by the frameworks of interpretation which they bring to them. That is how people represent them, the words people use about them, the stories people tell about them, the images of them people produce, the emotions people associate with them, the ways people classify and

¹ i.e. objects and practices that fit Raymond Williams' social definition of culture, "in which culture is a description of a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour" (Williams, 1961: 57).

conceptualise them and the values people place on them (Hall, 1997: 3). This idea was imperative in gathering and compiling, the stakeholder's views on *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

Production focuses not only with how that object is produced technically, but how that object is produced culturally, i.e. how it is made meaningful during the production process. While producers attempt to encode products with particular meanings and associations, this is not the end of production, because this tells one nothing about what those products may come to mean for those using them. Meanings are not just 'sent' by producers and 'received', passively by consumers; rather meanings are actively made during the process of consumption, through the use to which people put those products in their everyday lives (Du Gay *et al.*, 1997). This idea was crucial in compiling the research for this thesis, as it was the researchers intention to focus on the very specific way in which the students and teachers consume *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

Another way in which production and consumption are brought together and connected is through marketing research and a variety of feedback monitoring systems. According to Karl Marx in his analysis of the relations of capitalist production during the middle of the 19th century:

Production [is] at the same time consumption, and consumption is at the same time production. Each is directly its counterpart. But at the same time an intermediary movement goes on between the two. Production furthers consumption by creating material for the latter which otherwise would lack its object. But consumption in its turn furthers production, by providing for the products the individual for whom they are products. The product receives its last finishing touches in consumption. A railroad on which no one ride, which is consequently not used up, not consumed, is only a potential railroad ...without production, no consumption; but on the other hand, without consumption no production; since production would then be without a purpose (Marx, 1980, 1957-8: 24 quoted in Du Gay *et al.*, 1997: 52).

Therefore, for production to have any social meaning it has to be connected to consumption, and for an adequate analysis of any cultural product, an attempt should be made to understand how production and consumption are made to 'articulate'. In the present study, the specific dynamics of articulation involved were traced (i.e. the

aim of the programme, how the programme is marketed and how Liberty Learning Channel attempts to monitor and gain feedback about consumer activity).

Hugh Mackay noted that 'consumption' often has negative connotations associated with it, based on its dictionary definition which is "using up; destruction, waste, amount consumed" (Mackay, 1997: 2). However, for the purpose of his book (and this study) it is viewed as an active process associated with pleasure. "Consumption today is not seen by social scientists as corrupting, nor are consumers seen as the passive victims of capitalism" (Mackay, 1997: 3). Consumption practices are socially structured, therefore, "[e]mpirical, qualitative research on the everyday appropriation of cultural artefacts is precisely the focus of subculture theorists and others who have explored 'the pleasures of consumption'" (Mackay, 1997: 5). The daily viewing patterns and routines of students and teachers the researcher interviewed was crucial to the analysis of their viewing experiences. Given that they live at home and go to school during the day, their lives are governed by routine and set social practices.

In the introduction to *Consumption and Everyday Life* (Mackay, 1997), Mackay defines 'everyday life' as being concerned with 'the unpredictable, the improvised and with the routine activities and control of ordinary people as they go about their day-to-day lives' (Mackay, 1997: 7). The term can be used in several ways, but Mackay's definition above is the one applicable to this thesis, which seeks to examine consumption in everyday lives of the students and teachers interviewed. Crucial to the focus group interviews the researcher conducted was getting a sense of what the 'everyday' lives of the students and teachers were like and how their viewing of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* fitted into their daily lives.

The next part of this chapter will examine the research methodology and methods used in the present study.

Chapter One

Part Two

1.2. Methodology: Materials and Methods

Questionnaires, consisting of one closed question and five open-ended questions were utilised to elicit demographic information from the participants of both student and teacher focus groups (see Chapter three Part one for results). The questionnaires were administered prior to the start of the focus group discussions. The response rate was 100 percent, since all the respondents were assembled for the focus group discussions. The disadvantage of the survey was that it was superficial in its coverage of complex social matters because a survey questionnaire cannot measure attitudes and beliefs of the respondents (Babbie, 1995: 273). This study therefore could not measure attitudes and behavioural patterns and beliefs systems which could influence the participants viewership patterns of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. As a result, focus group discussions were employed to elicit information not gathered through the survey. There was no language problem since the questions were set in simple and understandable English and the target audience was literate.

To analyse the questionnaires, questions were grouped according to the information they probed and responses to these questions were coded. Descriptive statistical analyses were performed using the statistical programme SPSS (SPSS INC., Chicago). Since this research is descriptive, explorative and illustrative, no relations were postulated between variables and no specific statistical tests and methods of analysis were used.

Ethnographic research procedures, which are qualitative in nature, were also employed in this study. These included focus group interviews, in-depth interviews and participant observation (Results elicited using these methods are presented in Chapter two Part two; Chapter three Part two).

The main method used to obtain information was focus group interviews. This was because focus groups were seen as a device that allowed people to discuss issues abstracted from the respondents social identities, as informed by Habermas's (1989) concept of the public sphere (a public space for the discussion of topics affecting the

public good). As such, focus groups were used to stimulate some of the processes of public opinion formation, where public opinion is understood as the outcome of rational debate or negotiation, rather than as the agglomeration of individual attitudes (Fraser, 1990 quoted in Powers, 2001). Focus groups were also utilised because they tap real-life interactions of people and allow the researcher to get in touch with participants' perceptions, attitudes and opinions in a way that other procedures do not allow (Patton quoted in Brotherson, 1994: 104).

Focus groups also have the following advantages: they are cost-effective, yield quick results, permit a large sample size and allow the researcher to probe unanticipated themes (Cohen and Garrett, 1999). However, this is not to overlook the disadvantages of focus groups. This includes difficulties in organisation, individual behaviour possibly influencing opinions or distorting data, a less controlled environment for the researcher (Cohen and Garrett, 1999) and a problem with the generalisability of the results. Focus groups represent a relatively small group of people and the convenient nature of most focus group recruiting may not be representative of the potential users of a product or service (Steward and Shamdasani, 1990: 17).

Interviews were conducted on thirty-two focus groups, sixteen for teachers and sixteen for students. The study utilised Grade 12 teachers and students from urban (multi-racial schools in Durban), peri-urban (Tonga (predominantly Indian) and Imbali (predominantly Black) Townships) and rural schools in KwaZulu Natal (Eshowe Township (predominantly Black)). The researcher arbitrarily selected the above schools in each category on the basis of willingness of the inspector of schools and principals to participate in the project on specific dates. The focus group interviews were derived based on the social economic status of the schools and the four subject broadcasts of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* (English, Mathematics, Biology and Science). There was one focus group per subject from each category of schools and regions for both teachers and students. Overall, four focus groups each of teachers and students per subject were drawn from schools which charged R6000-7000 per year for fees, schools charging R5000-4000 per year for fees, schools charging R2000-3000 per year for fees and schools charging R1000 or less per year.

Focus group participants in the four regions under study were recruited through the use of convenience or purposive sampling (Dawson, Manderson and Tallo, 1992). This was possible through having a contact person (an Inspector of schools or a principal) in each of the regions, who approached heads of schools in the regions and asked those willing to participate in the study to send their teachers and students to a focus group venue at stipulated dates. While this kind of sampling is the simplest way of gathering group participants, it can be questionable in terms of achieving a diversity of opinions. However, when making arrangements for each focus group, the researcher was careful to stress to the contact person the importance of involving a diversity of ages, races, gender and students of different abilities. The focus group size for both teachers and students was to be composed of seven to ten participants. This size was influenced by the fact that the size must be small enough for everybody to have an opportunity to share insights and yet large enough to provide diversity of perceptions (Krueger, 1988: 27). The demographics of focus group interviewees is presented in Chapter three Part one section 3.1.1.

The focus group sessions took place in a natural setting. Natural setting here refers to an environment which was not alien to the respondents. During the focus group sessions, an episode of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was viewed as a stimulus (Greenbaum, 1998: 64-65) prior to the discussions on the programme (the episodes used for the stimulus were selected bearing in mind that the content of the specific episodes could conceivably skew the results of the focus groups). This was because focus groups are usually much more effective if the participants are exposed to specific materials to which they react. This stimulated their thinking about the topic. A moderator's guide, composed of open-ended questions (Appendix B, questions with a star were not posed to the students) was used to guide the focus group interviews. The same set of questions was used for all focus groups, thus enabling comparisons to be made between the answers given by different groups. The researcher was a participant observer and kept her comments as non-directive as possible and asked questions and probed to promote interaction. This role of the researcher ensured that focus group members felt comfortable to speak freely (Jacobi, 1991: 197) while also ensuring that the group discussion remained on track and when irrelevant topics were introduced by participants, the researcher carefully and subtly guided the conversation back on target. During the conversation, participants

vocalised experiences and reactions with others whom they share some common characteristics or frames of reference. Members were encouraged to disagree, contradict and build upon what their fellow interviewees had said. The aim of the discussion was not to build consensus, but to find out what each member of the focus group thought about the topic under discussion.

During the actual focus group interviews, particularly in the category of teachers, it was not possible to get a focus group size of seven to ten participants. Only a few attended the focus group interviews and the sessions were conducted anyway. When the researcher followed up to see whether all schools were informed, she found out that they had been informed but were not interested in participating. Some schools had released their teachers to attend the discussions but the latter failed to attend because they were not interested in the programme. This was also compounded by the fact that some of the schools had only one teacher per subject or others were not willing to send all their subject teachers to the interviews. To compound the problem further, the multi-racial schools willing to participate in the study were not willing to send their students and teachers to a central venue for the interviews. So, in case of the multi-racial schools, the researcher was forced to derive focus group participants from one school and therefore at times, was forced to hold focus group interviews of one to four teachers. A total of 145 matric students and 57 teachers participated in the study. This number goes well beyond a 'saturation sample' for qualitative research, defined as "the point at which additional life histories add particulars, but do not increase the general understanding about the group" (Barnhurst and Wartella, 1998: 282). This point has been found to be somewhere between 25 and 30 (Berteaux, 1981).

It is noteworthy that the focus group interviews carried out in the different regions of KwaZulu-Natal were not intended to be representative of the entire South African society, but as indicators of how matric students and teachers perceived *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. However, small-scale qualitative studies like this research project, employing reflexive and innovative methods appropriate to the research question, produce valuable insights which can be transferred to different contexts and certainly provide transferable approaches, methods and strategies which,

while not necessarily adopted lock, stock and barrel for a new project, can certainly function as a provisional “blueprint” for future research design (Gray, 2003: 73).

Other supplementary methods utilised were in-depth interviews and participant observation. Most of the data collected using these methods has been presented in the section entitled SABC educational broadcasting services with more emphasis on educational television and the history, production and distribution of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Participant observation at *Liberty Learning Channel* production and distribution studio was carried out between 3-14 July 2000. While ethnographies are based on long term and in-depth fieldwork, most television audience studies have involved only brief periods of contact, in some cases less than one hour, with informants (Seiter *et al.*, 1994: 227). Despite this obvious difference in methodological practice, ethnographic audience studies share ethnographies, “basic interest in an empirical investigation of cultural practices as lived experiences” (Seiter *et al.*, 1994: 227). The researcher in this study was a regular participant observer (between 3-14 July 2000) in the activities carried out at Liberty Learning Channel on a daily basis, reconstructing their interactions and activities in the field notes taken on the spot or as soon as possible after their occurrence (see Spradley, 1980). This helped the researcher to elicit from Liberty Learning Channel crew their collection of stories, anecdotes, and myths such as are found in the daily round of gossip in the workers’ tea room. These provided the basis for determining the extent to which formal and informal goals and objectives were being met.

Direct observation of the production of tapes and presentation of the live broadcast was done and occasional conversation using ethnographic question asking with the presenters and other workers were done and notes taken. According to Michael Agar (1996: 95) these questions are vital as one begins to learn from a group, one needs questions, both to add to ones knowledge and to check things that one thinks one understands. Documents and other artefacts about *Liberty Learning channel Programme* were collected and analysed. These included newspaper articles and letters from viewers to William Smith, the mastermind behind the programme and also the presenter of the science subject.

There are a number of reasons why the researcher chose to use participant observation. These include the fact that observational research is a superior technique to survey research, experimentation and focus groups for collecting information on non-verbal behaviour. While focus groups and surveys are useful for obtaining data on people's opinions about different things, they are less accurate indicators of how individuals actually behave in specific situations. While the survey questionnaire is rather an artificial and restrictive instrument limited to a relatively small number of previously chosen questions, the observational method allows in-depth study of the whole event, situation or individual. Another major advantage of much observational research is that behaviour takes place in its natural environment. However, in observational research, the researcher lacks control over the behaviour of the people being observed and over the environment in which observed behaviour occurs. There is a great scope for inaccuracies to creep into the data when observations are not catalogued immediately. In this study, this problem was overcome by taking down notes immediately after an observation was made.

Another practical difficulty faced by observational researchers can be gaining entry to the environment targeted for the study. Some organisations or departments within organisations are reluctant to allow unlimited access to all sections of the organisation (Morgan, 1988: 16). Restricted access limits the amount of detail the researcher is able to obtain about the organisational operation. In this study, entry into Liberty Learning Channel organisation was granted. However, on getting there, the researcher was initially not allowed to enter the production studio and the studio where the broadcast takes place. Later permission was granted on condition that the researcher should not under any circumstance give a description of what is contained in those studios. It was inferred that if she did discuss the studio contents, she would be infringing patent rights. Access was not allowed into one of the 'private' rooms. However, a detailed account of what happened in the rest of the organisation was documented.

The third method utilised was in-depth interviews with key informants. Key informants are individuals who possess special knowledge, status or communicative skills and who are willing to share that knowledge and skills with the researcher (Zelditch, 1962). They are frequently chosen because they have access (in time, space

or perspective) to observations denied to the researcher. Data collected from key informants may add materials to baseline data otherwise inaccessible to the researcher because of time constraints in the study. Since key informants are often reflective individuals, they may contribute insights to process variables not evident to the investigator. They may also sensitise the researcher to value dilemmas within the culture and implications of specific findings (Goetz and Lecompte, 1984: 120). In this study, the researcher sought out a judgmental sample, that is seeking out particular people who are specialists in an area she wanted to know more about (Agar, 1996: 168).

In-depth interviews were conducted to elicit the views of the presenters, and partners in the production of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Interviews were therefore, held with the then SABC manager of educational television (Nicola Golambik), the Liberty Foundation executive director (Hylton Apealbaum) and *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* founder (William Smith) and three presenters of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, namely: Moira Clarke, Cathy Hastie and Janet Unterslak). The participants' consent was sought through telephone calls and e-mail. A detailed moderator guide consisting of open-ended questions were designed and utilised to guide these interviews.

Open-ended questions were used because they allowed the respondents freedom in answering questions and the chance to provide in-depth responses. They also allowed for answers that researchers did not originally foresee in the construction of the questionnaire and may suggest possible relationships with answers or variables (Wimmer and Domminick, 1983: 112). According to Roger Wimmer and Joseph Domminick (1997: 25), research questions are generally used when the researcher is unsure about the nature of the problem under investigation. The above explains why research questions were formulated in this study. The interviews were conducted in the conversational mode of everyday interaction. John Lofland (1971) emphasised that this mode communicates empathy, encouragement and understanding. Michael Patton (1980) notes that conversational style permits interviewers to remain neutral in responses without risking adequate rapport. All agree that the conversational mode, which is familiar and comfortable for all respondents is most likely to elicit the trust,

confidence and ease among respondents necessary for yielding elaborate, subtle and valid data. The interviews varied in length from 60 to 90 minutes.

It should be noted that the researcher was aware of the weaknesses of this method, namely: the likelihood of being faced with formidable amounts of data. Transcribing is time-consuming and is not always possible for respondents to give meaningful answers. Also, the researcher was aware that the method is criticised on the basis that observations of actual behaviour are more accurate as a means of establishing actual views/peoples activities. The problem with the observation method is that it leaves open the question of interpretation. If one wanted to ascertain what the actual state of mind of the viewer/people being observed is, one would probably have to ask them. The observed may lie or misrepresent his thoughts and feelings, but at least through his verbal responses, the researcher can gain some kind of access to language the observed uses and also gain insight into the categorisations through which he constructs his conscious world (Morley, 1992).

As Morley points out, the interview method should therefore be defended for the following reasons:

Not simply for the access it gives the researcher to the respondents conscious opinions and statements but also for the access that it gives to the linguistic terms and categories...through which respondents construct their worlds and their own understanding of their activities (1992: 181).

It should be noted that the interviews present the viewing experiences of the informants as they described them and that ethnographic work (in the sense of drawing on what we can perceive and experience in everyday life setting) acquires its critical mark when it functions as a reminder that reality is always more complicated and diversified than our theories can represent, and that there is no such things as an "audience" whose characteristics can be set once and for all (Ang, 1994: 110). Gray (2003: 121) argues "as researchers, we can never capture the "whole truth" of any aspect of the social and cultural, rather we can from our specific vantage point, produce a version of the truth, but one which we present modestly for others to consider".

The reason for using multiple methods in this study was that the secret to good ethnographic analysis lies in its reliance on different kinds of data from numerous different sources, all of which support one's conclusions. Without what the researcher thinks of as 'massive over-determination of patterns' the results are suspect. A few focus group interviews were neither massive nor determining nor much help in building the complicated patterns that ethnography aspires to. Focus groups were just too limited, too constrained, too thin and well focused.

Data from the focus group interviews, field notes and in-depth interviews were qualitatively analysed. When interview responses are to be qualitatively rather than quantitatively analysed, Lofland (1971) underscores Pertti Pelto and Gretel Pelto's admonitions (1978) in cautioning that, all responses, whether recorded mechanically or by note-taking, should represent the respondent's own words and usage's. Any researcher paraphrasing may mask, distort, or replace connotations intended or assumed by respondents and thus misrepresent the data. Therefore in this study, all key informant and focus group interviews were audio-taped and field notes were taken immediately after a conversation was held to ensure that an accurate verbatim record of the interviewee was kept. The recorded discussions were listened to afterwards by the researcher, then transcribed and analysed.

Data was analysed using an analytical induction strategy. An analytical induction strategy involves scanning the data for categories of phenomena and for relationships among such categories, developing working typologies and hypotheses upon an examination of initial cases, then modifying and refining them on the basis of subsequent cases (Robinson, 1951; Znanieck, 1934). In order to cope with complexities of the huge amount of data from focus groups and in-depth interviews, transcripts were marked with coloured pens. This was done by marking sections that relate to specific themes or categories for later aggregation. The researchers' aim was to prepare a report that emerged from, and was supported by available evidence. In preparing the report, the researcher primarily sought to identify evidence that was repeated and was common to several participants, while not forgetting the ideas and perceptions that are different from several participants. Direct quotes were used where necessary to capture the intended meaning of the speaker as fairly and accurately as possible. All the transcripts from the key informant interviews (see appendix E), focus

group interviews (see appendix F1 for teachers and F2 for students), and artefacts (see appendix D) are presented in the appendices and are offered as evidence of the researcher's conclusions.

Seven categories were identified during the analysis of the data, namely: television programmes generally watched; importance of educational television in teaching and learning; usage pattern of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*; how *Liberty Learning Channel* viewers feel about the programme; relevance of the programme to the needs and expectations of students and teachers; suggestions for the improvement of the programme; and the effects of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* on the community. Results will be presented under the different categories identified in the analysis of the data for both students and teachers (see Chapter three Part two for results).

1.2.1. The present study and the structure of the thesis

The objective of this study was to examine the role of television broadcast-based distance education in South Africa as a possibility for extending the provision of formal education; how the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and the Department of Education fulfils the promise of extending education; and the mapping out of the complex issues involved in the production, distribution and the consumption of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. In light of the above objective, chapter one, part one, of this study offers details on: the nature of the research problem (section 1.1); the need for the present study (section 1.1.2.); the research questions to be examined (section 1.1.3); the theoretical foundations of the study (sections 1.1.4). Chapter one, part two, gives the methodological underpinnings of this study (Chapter one Part two section 1.2.).

Chapter two of this study is also divided into two parts. Part one gives a critique of: the conventional system of education (section 2.2.) and why distance education is an alternative option for provision of education (section 2.3.); a general picture of education in Africa (section 2.4.); the educational situation in South Africa, highlighting the distance education scenario in South Africa (section 2.5); current educational practices and their impact on education (section 2.6); and why distance education, and particularly television broadcast-based distance education, is crucial in

the provision of education in developing countries in the face of globalisation of mass communications and new information technologies (section 2.7.).

Chapter two, part two, offers a detailed examination of: the role of mass media in distance education and television broadcast-based distance education effectiveness in teaching and a learning (section 2.2.2); the possibility of television broadcast-based distance education in South Africa (section 2.2.3.); South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC's) educational broadcasting services with emphasis on educational television (section 2.2.4); and the history, production and distribution of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* (section 2.2.5).

Additionally, chapter three is also divided into two parts. In general, part one of the chapter offers demographic information about the teachers and students who participated in the focus groups interviews conducted during the course of this study (see Appendix A for the questionnaire used to elicit these information) and part two offers results on the consumption of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

The final chapter (chapter 4) of this study offers a general conclusion and recommendations. Each part of the study is presented separately in the preceding and succeeding chapters. This method of reporting was selected so as to highlight the phases of the study and to allow the reader to easily understand the many facets of this investigation.

CHAPTER TWO

PART ONE

Review of literature and background information to the present study

2.1. Introduction

It is now widely accepted that successful modern economies and societies require citizens with a strong foundation in general education; with the desire and ability to continue to learn, to apply, and to develop new knowledge, skills, and technologies; to move flexibly between occupations; to accept responsibility for personal performance; to set and achieve appropriate standards, and to work co-operatively (ISTE, 2000: 5; Hawkins¹). It is the critical role of the education and training process to prepare learners to be such citizens by acknowledging that learners themselves are resources of knowledge and that the process of learning, while building on prior knowledge, should be a process of expanding the boundaries of knowledge, and building capacity throughout their lives (Gutlig *et al.*, 1998: 4).

Julius Nyerere described this critical education potential when he said:

Man can only liberate himself or develop himself. He cannot be liberated or developed by another. For man makes himself. It is his ability to act deliberately for a self-determined purpose, which distinguishes him from the other animals. The expansion of his own consciousness, and therefore of his power over himself, his environment, and his society, must therefore ultimately be what we mean by development. So development is for man, by man, and of man. The same is true of education. Its purpose is the liberation of man from the restraints and limitation of ignorance and dependency. Education has to increase men's physical and mental freedom to increase their control over themselves, their own lives, and the environment in which they live. The ideas imparted by education, or released in the mind through education, should therefore be liberating ideas; the skills acquired by education should be liberating skills. Nothing else can properly be called education (quoted in Young *et al.*, 1980: 62).

In other words, education is to do with power. People without education are at the mercy of those with it, who can use what they know to their advantage and to the disadvantage of the ignorant around them. Education is a means of gaining power, and not simply the right of the better-educated minority. On this showing the case for

¹ The World Bank Institute <http://www.worldbank.org/> date accessed 10/2/2004

expanding education is a simple egalitarian one. While education alone will not transform the world, or the life of most of those who get it, the provision of education to only part of a community, or part of the world, reinforces relative deprivation.

However, conventional systems of education, current educational practices (instructivism) could be said to fall short of preparing such kind of citizens (ISTE, 2000: 5; Hawkins²). While substantial funds are annually spent supporting educational facilities, there appears to be little cost effectiveness (Hidson, 1992). Many people leave school significantly illiterate (Amory, 1997; Andrew, 1990: 29). However, to function in a complex, information age society, students need to acquire more than a discrete thesaurus of unrelated facts.

In this section of the study, failures of conventional system of education to meet the demands of education in the world are documented; distance education as an alternative method of providing education is assessed; the utilisation of distance education in the developed and developing worlds is documented, current educational practices and their impacts of education are discussed, alternative educational theory which could help prepare the kind of citizens needed for the information age is proposed, and the character and the scope of distance education in the face of globalisation and new technologies is highlighted.

2.2. Failures of conventional system of education to meet the demands of education in both developed and developing countries

The goal of the 1990 Jomtein conference was to have basic education for all and universal literacy by 2000; an ambitious target indeed. Ten years on, progress has been much slower than was hoped for. Despite enrolling an additional 50 million children in primary schools, today it is estimated that more than 130 million children still do not have access to primary education (DFID, 1999: 11). A further 150 million children start primary school but drop out before they have completed four years of education. Thus, over 40 percent of primary-school-age children either never start school or drop out before they have acquired basic literacy skills. Two out of every three children not in school are girls. The problem of inequity and lack of education

² The World Bank Institute <http://www.worldbank.org/> date accessed 10/2/2004

for all is serious (Reddi and Dighe, 2000: 155). Regional disparities in investment have been growing significantly. In 1990 Lockheed and Verspoor showed that during the period 1965-1985 annual pupil expenditure on primary education in low-income countries fell from US \$ 41 to \$ 31. Watkins reported:

Britain spends \$3, 553 per student at the primary level compared to \$ 27 in Zambia. The US spends \$ 5, 000 per student...compared with \$ 12 in countries such as India and Nepal...On average an OECD country spends \$ 4, 636 per student on primary and secondary education compared with \$ 165 in the developing world (Watkins 1999: 12)

However, such figures should be read in context. Education costs are largely a function of local (teacher) wage rates. As such, realistic comparisons are better made in terms of comparative gross national product (GNP) and comparisons between teachers' and average wage rates in the country under consideration.

Much of what passes for primary education in tens of thousands of classrooms in the developing world might be described as little more than 'child-minding'. Often teachers who are poorly educated, poorly trained, paid and professionally supported, stand in front of increasingly large classes, with abysmally few teaching resources. The school buildings are frequently badly constructed or falling into disrepair. Furniture is scarce, dysfunctional or totally absent. Often there is no running water available with few or no toilet facilities. Research shows that, in real terms, total aid to the education sector was even lower in the mid-1990s than before the Jomtien conference (held in 1990). While some donors have re-allocated aid budgets in favour of basic education, many have not (Bennell with Furlong, 1998; Mueller, 1996; McGee *et al.*, 1998). Debt levels have risen everywhere, and structural adjustment, the policy envisaged to bring relief through improved economic growth, has often further impoverished millions more of the poorest of the poor. Even more disconcertingly, we are already receiving warnings from academics and commentators that the 2015 target of achieving universal education for All, in turn look unlikely to be realised (Bennell, 1999, Colclough, 1999, Watkins, 1999). Oxfam have made one set of projections using current data and conclude:

The number of children out of school continue to decline, but far too slowly. About 96m children will be out of school in 2005. In 2015, a quarter of a century after the Jomtien conference, 75m will still be out of school (Watkins, 1999: 54)

With fifty million teachers and a billion students in the world, most of them in the developing countries of the South, any summary of educational progress over the last forty years is inevitably crude. The purpose of summarising these scenarios is to ground the argument that follows about the role of open and distance learning. At the most general, the quantitative advances mean that, in much of the world, we are in sight of universal primary education and have some chance of attaining universal secondary education. The main exceptions are in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. At the same time, budgetary constraints are holding back the expansion and improvement of education. There are large numbers of adults who never went to school or who dropped out early. Their life chances are restricted and their potential contribution to their society and economy may also be reduced. The combination of budgetary restraint and rapid expansion means that much education is of limited quality and so of restricted effectiveness (Perraton, 2000: 7).

Existing education institutions need to respond to the demands of a fast-changing world. It would appear that education structures, like so many of our other social institutions (e.g. the family or systems of governance) are becoming, as Anthony Giddens (1999) has put it, 'shell institutions'. Shell institutions may continue to look the same on the outside, but on the inside they are either changing in response to the growing forces of globalisation or becoming anachronistic. In light of the scale of the universal education for All (UEFA) failure, existing forms of basic education provision simply do not seem to be up to the job. Even if the current education structures could do so quickly enough to meet the new targets of gender equity by 2005, and basic education for all by 2015, conventional education organisations are not noted for the speed of their internal change dynamic.

Teacher education over the last two generations is criticised for not providing the number of teachers needed to do the job (Perraton and Potashnik, 1997). In many countries, schools have grown faster than teachers have been trained to work in them. Various strategies have been used to overcome the shortage: raising class sizes and introducing double shifts, both have the budgetary merit of holding down costs per student. Recruiting or retraining untrained teachers is a way of putting a teacher in a classroom, normally at a lower wage than that of a qualified teacher. Even where

there are reasonable numbers of trained teachers, particular, sometimes crippling, shortages may remain. As junior-secondary education has expanded, so many countries lack specialist junior-secondary teachers. Shortages tend to be particularly acute in science and mathematics. There are gender disparities, with girls' education held back in some countries by a shortage of women teachers, and a scarcity of male teachers in other areas. There are for example, few male teachers at primary level in some countries in Western European and English-speaking Caribbean (Perraton, 2000: 59). As Clarence Beeby suggested in his classical analysis *The Quality of Education In Developing countries*, the educational background of primary school teachers is the major constraint on the quality of education they can offer. In many countries of the third world, the demand for primary education has outstripped the supply of trained primary school teachers. Untrained or under-trained and uneducated teachers have been pressed into service. Their own lack of education holds back the quality of what they do in the classroom:

The teacher in a village school who has himself struggled only to a doubtful Grade VI or Grade VII level is always teaching to the limits of his knowledge. He clings desperately to the official syllabus, and the tighter it is, the safer he feels. Beyond the pasteboard covers of the one official textbook lies the dark void where unknown questions lurk. The teacher is afraid of any other questions in the classroom but those he himself asks, for they are the only ones to which he can be sure of knowing the answer (Beeby, 1966: 6).

Yet, even hesitant, under-educated teachers are doing an indispensable job for without them the schools would close down or would make do with teachers even less educated. While the proportion of untrained teachers in an education system should decline as more trained teachers graduate from colleges of education, the process is slow. Many educational systems will employ untrained teachers for generations to come. At the same time, the content of education will continue to change, rapidly and inexorably.

In various ways education in many developing countries is dysfunctional. It relies heavily on rote learning which leads to an inappropriate reverence for paper qualifications, and is based on curricula that are irrelevant to the student's future lives. It also creates an imbalance, with many school leavers unemployed, while on the other hand there is a shortage of skilled and semi-skilled workers (Young *et al.*, 1980:

6). According to Daudi Mwakawango (1986: 82), developing countries are characterised by low literacy rates, low per capita incomes, poverty, disease and an average life expectancy of almost half that of developed countries. Daudi Mwakawango (1986: 82) further states that although the death rate is high, population growth is phenomenal. More alarming, the rate of increase of school enrolment is dramatically slower than in the 1970s. The school-age population is growing faster than the schools. Relative or actual decline in enrolment can be attributed to the economic situations, both the decline in national investment in education and the economic squeeze on families which may result in the withdrawal of children from school, or non-continuation to the next stage. The economic crisis and the burden of foreign debts, the handling of which is at the mercy of international banking concerns and the governments that sponsor these institutions, are depleting the resources of third world countries and thereby restricting their ability to increase and improve educational opportunities. Some developed countries, through limited bilateral aid programmes, have helped promote certain educational activities in some countries. However, the overall economic crisis has resulted in reduced cooperative support from governments, organisations, and institutions such as foundations and universities. This affects girls particularly, who form only one third of the secondary school population (World Bank, 1988: 31).

In many countries, the education provided is of poor quality. Partly, this is because there is not enough money to cover the basics: teachers, buildings, materials (van der Merwe, Windell and Mitchell, 1988: 50; Botha, 1993: 3; Kupe, 1995; Mpofu, Manhando and Tomaselli, 1996: 295; SAIDE, 1999). Partly, it is a consequence of earlier rapid expansion: large numbers of teachers are untrained or under-trained (UNSECO, 1997: 206). The shortage of resources has not just kept children out of school but has restricted the quality of education for those who do get there:

Schools in developing countries often lack the most basic resources needed for education such as qualified teachers, facilities and textbooks. Double and triple shifts of a few hours are the norm in some regions; the number of days in the school year has been reduced; and teacher's salaries have declined so much that fully qualified teachers are often a luxury and teacher turnover and attendance are problematic. Even with low salaries, almost all of the school budgets are spent on personnel, so there is little left for school textbooks and other instructional materials-less than \$ 1 in low-income countries at the

primary level, versus \$52 in the industrialised countries. (Levin and Lockheed 1993: 3).

As a result, those children who complete school are unlikely to have a better grasp of the subjects they have studied than had the teachers who taught them.

2.2.1. Ways of improving quality of schooling

To improve the schools, in-service teacher training is a practical alternative. Its attraction is that the teachers are not taken away from the classroom while they study. If vacation courses are linked with correspondence lessons, radio broadcasts, and some supervised classroom practice, then it is possible to make qualitative improvements in the work of primary school teachers (Young *et al.*, 1980: 18-19). An in-service course of this kind requires two different jobs to be done. The longer, more difficult job is to provide a complete training for teachers, not only raising their own academic subject knowledge but also attempting to improve their classroom teaching. This has been the aim of teacher-upgrading projects in, for example, the Middle East refugee camps, Swaziland and Sri Lanka.

A second, more modest, attempt is to provide a general education for teachers, making up for some of the schooling they lack. This has been rationale for the use of correspondence and radio at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. To achieve higher standards and gain confidence teachers have to acquire a fuller mastery of the subjects they are going to teach and to practice the skills of classroom teaching. Some of the work must be done face-to-face, through residential courses or through effective supervision of the trainee teachers in the classroom. Also, some can be done at a distance and this opens up the possibility of training teachers without taking them out of school (Young *et al.*, 1980: 15).

In most parts of the world, the demand for and commitment to the expansion of schools has led to a desperate shortage of trained teachers at all levels. The demand for school places is beginning to outstrip the capacity of many economies to supply them. At the same time, technical changes in medicine, in agriculture and in engineering mean that new ways of living are open to many adults, but may be open only if they have received some relevant education. This double demand, for schools and for adult education, puts a strain on educational systems that few can bear. The

scale of the demand has led to search for alternative methods of education that can reach more people, or reach different people, or do so more cheaply. Distance teaching offers some of these possibilities (Perraton, 1982).

2.2.2. What is distance education?

Distance education is not a new phenomenon; it has been a mode of teaching and learning for at least the past one hundred years (Moore and Kearsley, 1996). The first distance learning was known as 'correspondence education' and used printed course materials delivered by post (Saba, 1997). The term distance education is used to cover various forms of study at all levels where students are not in direct physical contact with their teachers. The term 'distance education' acquired its universal acceptance in 1982 when the International Council for Correspondence Education (ICCE), a UNESCO affiliated organisation, changed its name into the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE). Prior to this universal acceptance, a number of terms were used to describe this mode of teaching and learning (Gachui and Matiru, 1989).

Correspondence studies is the most commonly used term, which according to Borje Holmberg has existed for about a hundred years. This basically described the mode of instruction materials rather than what was entailed in learning at a distance. Nowadays, distance education relies mainly on the printed word but may use a number of other media such as radio, television, tape recordings, learning kits, telephone or computer. The term 'correspondence study' therefore is no longer comprehensive enough. 'Home study' is a term used in America, Canada and Australia to describe this system of education. While it emphasises the home, a student may not necessarily study at home at all. The term is inadequate to explain the meaning of this mode of teaching. 'School of the Air' or 'School Broadcasts' are common terms in Mauritius and England and many parts of the Commonwealth including Kenya. The term is restrictive to broadcast programmes that can be tuned in over the radio and television. 'Independent Studies' is another popular term in America and Europe. Another term is 'Distance Teaching' or 'Distance Learning', distance teaching is too teacher-oriented and distance learning is too student-based. Having examined all these definitions, it helps realise why the term distance education is the best definition. This is because it is education which is offered to

students who are at a distance, physically separated in space and time from their teachers (Gachui and Matiru, 1989: 11).

Several definitions are offered for distance education. According to Derek Rowntree (1992), distance education has evolved to mean both distance learning and teaching. According to Borje Holmberg (1981), distance education is the various forms of the study which are not under continuous and immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms or on the same premises, but which nevertheless benefit from the planning, guidance and tuition of tutorial organisations. Desmond Keegan (1988) defined distance education as the family of instructional methods in which the teaching behaviours are executed apart from the learning behaviours including those that are performed in the students presence, so that communication between the teacher and the student must be facilitated by print, electronic, mechanical or other devices. Perhaps the most comprehensive general definition of distance education is that which was first proposed by Keegan in 1980 and subsequently modified in 1986. Keegan's definition is based *inter lia* on an analysis of the definitions proposed by Holmberg (1977), Peters (1973), and Moore (1973). Keegan (1986: 49-50) identifies seven principal characteristics which he regards as being essential for any comprehensive definition: the separation of teacher and student; the influence of an educational organisation; the use of technical media; the absence of group learning, with students taught largely as individuals (while retaining the possibility of occasional seminars); participation in the most industrialised form of education and the privatisation of learning (in that learning occurs away from the group).

Whatever definition is offered, distance education is characterised by a separation of the teacher and the student, the extensive use of media such as printed text, audio cassettes, radio and television broadcast and now argument by on-line computer - assisted instructions and two-way communication so that the students may initiate or participate in dialogue.

2.2.3. A brief history of distance education

Correspondence education developed in the nineteenth century but spent the first half of the twentieth at the educational margins, dominated by profit-making colleges, and used as a route to social mobility by the socially and educationally disadvantaged.

When traditional academics are asked to authorise non-traditional learning, they are prone to comment that non-traditional learning “may succeed all right in minor areas in some courses, but of course it couldn’t in my area”. The comment is only half-correct. The reason it doesn’t work in the traditional academic’s area is that recognition has been refused in advance on an *a priori* presumption of inferiority, perhaps wholly on the criterion of the communication technology enjoyed. If communication is other than speech in the standard classroom format, the non-traditional programme is frequently refused recognition (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996; Wedemeyer, 1984: 135).

Of course there were exceptions: land-grant universities ran correspondence programmes from the late nineteenth century and, in Britain, they were a staple of vocational training in the few professions with a significant number of working class entrants such as accountancy and surveying. In the colonial world, it was an important route to educational qualifications to banish ignorance and illiteracy (Young *et al.*, 1980: 11). Discussions of distance education among ministers of education in Africa in the 1970s got a warm response because many of the ministers had undertaken some of their education by correspondence. The Soviet Union used distance education to increase the stock of trained labour in the 1930s. For all the exceptions, it was an area of education that attracted neither government support nor regulation. It had little public esteem: “she spoke in a strange, little girl’s voice, with an accent that suggested she had taken a correspondence course in posh, but had failed to complete the curriculum” (Forbes, 1996: 144). This was not the case in South Africa, as will be argued in section 2.5.1.

All this has changed. Governments have invested heavily in open and distance learning, and a new academic literature has grown up as a protective thicket around it. The main international agencies have generated policy statements: the European Commission in 1991 and UNESCO 1997 (Commission of the European Communities, 1991; UNESCO 1997). Open and distance learning was specifically

referred to in the Maastricht treaty in 1993. The European Commission's policy statement was matched with money. Its main vehicle for promoting educational cooperation in Europe was the *Socrates Programme*, funded with 850 million ECU (\$1.19 billion) for its first five years, rising to 1.4 billion ECU (\$ 1. 57 billion) for the second. Within this programme, most of it devoted to conventional student mobility, the Commission has supported regional open and distance learning projects, 63 of them in 1998. The World Bank and other regional development banks have provided support for distance education. Expenditure on open and distance learning, its volume of academic literature, its appearance in legislation, even the fact that distance-education students today read their Open University texts as they commute where they used to hide them in brown paper wrappers, all are markers of a new legitimacy (Perraton, 2000: 9).

Economics and education each give part of the reasons for the new legitimacy of distance education. The promise that open and distance learning could extend educational opportunities at a lower cost than conventional education was a powerful motivator (Dodds *et al.*, 1972: 10; Young *et al.*, 1980: 31). The fact that distance education could teach more, and reach more, or accelerate educational change, were reasons enough for the educational philosophies justifying expansion and reform. Distance education had achieved some recognition throughout the developing world as a legitimate policy option for formal school systems (Nettleton, 1991: 102). In Africa, particularly, it had become acceptable as an alternative to regular education delivery at secondary and higher levels of education, when the need for rapid expansion began to outstrip the resources available (Dodds, 1994).

It is in this context that distance education has assumed importance. It is seen not only as a complement to the formal education system, but also as a low cost alternative to expanding conventional education. Flexible delivery, based primarily on the application of distance education technologies and methodologies, is the key to the future of education and training. It could well be the only viable option to meet the escalating world-wide need for lifelong learning, for as Pierre Patry (1995) has pointed out, "traditional education systems throughout the world have been stretched to the limit by the population explosion, scarcity of resources and expansion of knowledge." In the future, flexible delivery is likely to play a more significant role at

all levels of education and training, as globalisation becomes the norm. As Peter Swannell (1997: 17) highlighted recently, flexible learning systems are based on a “philosophy of giving people what they want, where they want it, when they want it”.

However, it needs to be made clear that no method of educational provision is intrinsically better than another. Rather, the appropriateness of selecting a particular method or combination of methods is determined entirely by the context in which they are to be used and the educational needs they are intended to fulfil (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

2.3. Distance education as an alternative means of providing education

In both developing and developed countries, the possibility of supplementing or even perhaps replacing conventional teaching methods by teaching at a distance has had wide appeal. For the developing countries, where the supply of trained and competent teachers is often severely restricted, teaching at a distance materials can be produced by a small skilled group of teachers who set a standard of excellence capable of wide dissemination, bypassing the need for training, in the first instance, a generation of teachers and thus significantly reducing the time scale for mass education (Whitlock, 1980). An example of this can be seen in India, where the central government, with technical assistance from UNESCO, has been involved in planning an Open School project at the secondary level based on the Central Board of Secondary Schools. Such a system would not only cater for ‘drop-outs’ from the conventional system, a large and increasing number forced for economic reasons to abandon full-time education and seek employment, but also ‘left-outs’, since the conventional secondary education system is not equipped to cater for the increasing size of the school population.

In the developed countries the motives for experiments in teaching at a distance are more complex and here, perhaps, the cost of employing teachers is a more significant factor, but it is worth noting that one of the three primary objectives of the state government of Nordrhein-Westfalen in setting up the Fernuniversitat in Hagen (Germany) was to deal with the fact that the conventional universities could not cope with qualified potential students. However, even in developed countries the lateral expansion of knowledge (the arrival of new subjects and new disciplines), can and often has outstripped the supply of teachers. We can see, for example, in the United

Kingdom that the government in 1991 began to use the expertise of the Open University in the area of continuing education and for updating in subjects such as computer science and the use of computing in management where the advances have been so rapid as to deny the opportunity for training a large cohort of teachers (Jenkins and Koul, 1991: 154).

Also, distance teaching methods are used to support schools and to supplement the ordinary work of classroom teachers. It is imperative to note here that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* plays such a role in support of South African grade 10 to 12 pupils, as will be shown in chapter two part two section 2.2.5. Indeed, it is often valuable to distinguish between the in-school and out-school and out-of-school use of distance teaching. That is, between its use to support teaching where students come together at least several times a week and its use to provide teaching for students who meet only once a week or even less often. Despite the blurring of the distinction, a concentration on the use of centrally prepared materials does distinguish distance teaching from orthodox education (Perraton, 1982). Distance teaching has also been used to support the orthodox educational system-directly, by providing courses for use in school; and indirectly, by enabling the in-service training of teachers.

2.3.1. Advantages and disadvantages of distance education

Two kinds of objections have been brought forward against correspondence education or distance education. Firstly, that it is essentially impersonal, missing the human communication which is the essence of good learning, and secondly, distance education is criticised for being inefficient with appallingly high dropout rates. The isolation from tutor means that, even when a student's work is marked promptly and returned to him, there is a considerable delay between learning or practising something and getting informed feedback on it. This can have a number of unfortunate effects. First, the student may not be able to get on with his course at all. If he cannot work out a problem in mathematics, for example, he may not be able to do anything more until he gets help from his tutor. Or if he is working in a less sequential subject, he may actually learn something which is wrong, and find it hard to unlearn owing to the delay in feedback from his tutor (Young *et al.*, 1980: 39). This argument is on the face of it a strong one, but looks a bit irrelevant when there is a shortage of teachers and the alternatives are packaged learning or none at all.

Distance education is also criticised for employing rote learning and supporting the diploma disease. There is therefore considerable pressure on students to learn by rote, especially if they have learned in that style at primary school. This may lead to the belief that to satisfy the examiner all they need do is reproduce what is in their course (Young *et al.*, 1980: 36-39; Sewart *et al.*, 1984). The political will to establish new distance education programmes often does not turn into consistent political support to maintain those programmes through continued provision of adequate resources or recognised high-level institutional status. Partly through this lack of status and resources, many programmes fail to achieve the enrolments intended, and therefore fail to achieve the economies of scale, which, in turn, produce income and bring down the per student costs.

ACNielsen's³ analysis raised the following critical points in a provisional assessment of distance learning in relation to mainstream education. The emphasis of 'classical' distance learning on mass production of learning on delivery of a curriculum in digestible chunks of information for learner consumption led to insufficient attention to the human interaction dimension of learning and the social construction of knowledge. There is little space for relating learning to the local context and orientating activities towards cultivating a disposition towards and competencies for social change. Distance learning is based on a value system which is individualistic and attaches great importance to the written word, thus it is often culturally alien to local traditions of communality and oral interaction. This effect is only strengthened by the use of a foreign language of communication. Teachers often fear being displaced by externally produced media, leaving them in a very subservient position, resulting in progressive 'de-professionalisation' and distance learning programmes tend to be developed outside the mainstream education management network, and thus have problems when it comes to their institutionalisation and the soliciting of routine financial support (Nielsen, 1991: 136-9 quoted in Young *et al.*, 1980: 32).

³ AC Nielsen's is the World's leading market information provider. It provides measurement and analysis of marketplace dynamics and consumer attitudes and behaviour. It is one of the leading market research companies offering both retail measurement services and customised research. Clients rely on ACNielsen's market research, proprietary products, analytical tools and professional service to understand competitive performance, to uncover new opportunities and to raise the profitability of their marketing and sales campaigns (<http://www.biz-community.com/Articles/196/19/2960.html> date accessed 01/03/2004)

Despite the above-mentioned weaknesses, distance education offers a viable alternative to contact education. First is its economy: school buildings are not required, no parking fees, travel or living costs and teachers and administrators can be responsible for many times more students than they can accommodate in a school. Its second main advantage is its flexibility: people who have got jobs can study in their own time, in their own homes, without being removed from their work for long periods (Redclift and Smith, 1996; Perraton, 1984). Its third advantage is that it can operate over long distances and cater for widely scattered bodies (Perraton, 1984) and it is possible to pursue programmes offered in other countries; providing the student with the opportunity to develop an international education (Chute and Gulliner, 1998; Harper, 1971; Holmberg, 1977: 18; Young *et al.*, 1980: 35). There lies also an opportunity cost to full-time education. If these students had stopped work for a year in order to study, they would not have been contributing to the national economy during that time. There is thus a hidden saving to the state if people are in employment rather than studying full-time. The system yields another saving in the form of buildings. It is not necessary to provide extra colleges for extra students. In the main, they study at home, and the regular Saturday group meetings for students do not need special buildings either; existing educational or non-educational-buildings can be used (Young *et al.*, 1980: 35-36).

2.3.2. Educational effectiveness of distance education

Educational effectiveness can be measured in various ways. There is some evidence of the outcomes of distance education for teacher training on four kinds of measure: on the audience reached, on learning, on personal benefits and on classroom performance. Reach is the simplest and restricted value, but nevertheless of some significance both for planners and researchers. When Pakistan wanted to teach a large proportion of its 155, 000 primary school teachers about a new curriculum, it called on the Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) to run a Primary Teachers' Orientation Course that used correspondence lessons and radio programmes. Over ten course cycles, it enrolled 83, 000 teachers (Robinson, 1993: 293), a larger number than would have been possible through any other method. Similarly the Department of Education and Science called the British Open University to develop a training pack about new national examinations that was distributed to all secondary schools in England and Wales (Prescott and Robinson, 1993: 293). African programmes run in

the 1960s and 1970s typically had between 600 and 3,000 students and the Tanzanian programme with 45,000 enrolled between 1976 and 1981 was very much the exception (Perraton, 1986). The evidence is limited but clear. Distance education can reach students in significant numbers both in industrialised countries with sophisticated communication systems and in developing countries with simpler systems and fewer resources.

Comparative research in Sri Lanka and Indonesia found that evidence of learning gains for trainee teachers studying at a distance, but suggested that learning in mathematics and the sciences posed greater problems than in other subjects. Of particular interest to us is that these two areas experienced greater problems than in teaching languages, where the results were comparatively good (Nielsen and Tatto, 1993: 126-7). The evidence is consistent. Where distance students follow their courses to the end, they tend to achieve as good examination results as other part-time students. Given a supportive environment, students working at a distance can reach examination success levels that are comparable with alternatives (Parraton, 1993: 393). Evidence from the Korean study shows that, even without the direct incentive, distance teaching is an effective way of preparing for examinations. This confirms results from other countries. In Australia, for example, pass rates in tertiary education are better for students in distance teaching than for those in part-time study and nearly as good as for full-time students (Karmel, 1974). In Britain, the National Extension College has achieved better results in English, using a multimedia course, than the average for all schools (Perraton, 1966). In Germany and Sweden, students in secondary equivalency courses can do better than comparable students following traditional methods (TRU, 1975).

Benefits of distance education courses to the learner include: accessible training to students in rural areas; students may complete their courses of study without the loss of salary due to relocation; and students are exposed to the expertise of the most qualified faculty (Ludlow, 1994). The primary benefit to educational institutions through distance education may be the increased number of non-traditional students they are able to attract and serve. We also legitimately can ask whether trainee teachers get what they want out of distance education. Again, evidence is limited and positive. Australian women teachers saw distance education as a way of acquiring

further qualifications in a profession dominated at the top by men (Evans and Nation, 1993: 272-274). Their vastly poorer sisters in Brazil saw a modest programme of teacher training as one of the few routes to social mobility open to them (Oliveira and Orivel, 1993: 86). We have few hard statistics about the long-term effects of distance education on the lives of students but the old bits of soft evidence tend to confirm that programmes of part-time education, bent to fit the circumstances of adult students, can be a potent force for social and personal change. This is likely to be true for programmes addressed specifically to teachers as well as for programmes on general education.

There are theoretical reasons for expecting distance education to cost less than the conventional alternatives; where teaching materials are prepared in large enough quantities it may be possible to achieve economics of scale that are not open to education with fixed class sizes. At the same time, an effective distance education programme requires the commitment of adequate resources for the production of those materials and for the processes of enrolment, administration and tutoring of students. These are no *a priori* reasons to assume that any distance education programme will be cost effective. The empirical evidence is clear. In ten of the eleven cases (of training teachers at a distance) where data is available, costs for distance education appear to have been lower than the alternative. Where we have detailed figures it is reasonable to conclude that distance education programmes can be designed for teachers at a cost of between one-third and two-thirds of conventional programmes (Perraton, 1993: 385). In part, this is because conventional teacher training is relatively expensive. Even where its cost is broadly comparable to that of regular secondary education its costs are often higher. In part it is because some distance-education programmes require students to pay fees, reducing the cost to public budgets, or have opportunity costs that again fall on the student. However, to a larger extent, it is because distance education allows for economies of scale and reduces the need to build additional colleges of education and housing for students (see Ludlow, 1994; Perraton, 2000).

In the final analysis, distance teacher retraining schemes have proven most appealing to planners on financial grounds, even though there have been only a few studies to date documenting the programmes' comparative cost-effectiveness (Chale, 1983;

Perraton, 1984). As is the case with virtually all media systems, distance teaching is capital intensive. It characteristically demands heavy capital investment in course development and equipment. However, once such initial investments have been made, costs do not rise with the rate of enrolments. Thus, the more likely will its costs per student be lower than those incurred within traditional programmes.

Several studies (Jamison, Klees and Wells, 1978; Perraton, 1982; Murphy and Zhiri, 1992) show that distance education has the potential to be more cost-effective than comparable conventional education. In conventional education recurrent costs rise more or less in line with student numbers. Teachers' salaries, which usually account for a high proportion of total recurrent costs, are beyond the control of school managers. In conventional education, therefore, while the costs of teaching students can be predicted with a high degree of accuracy, the measures which managers can take to control unit costs are quite limited (Cuban and Murphy, 1992). Early analysis of Telesecundaria (teaching secondary level courses by television in Mexico) suggested that it was cost-effective compared with conventional schools, but more recently its relative costs have risen (Perraton, 2000). The supervised study centres in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe show that the system can work and be less costly per student enrolled than the conventional alternative (Perraton, 1992). In Malawi, the cost of educating a student in the study centre system is between one-fourth and one-fifth of the cost of a student in a day secondary school (Curran and Murphy, 1992).

Distance teaching attracts the economist because it uses mass-production methods, which change the structure of educational costs. With traditional classroom methods, the costs of education rise in proportion to the number of children being educated. When every thirty or forty children need a teacher and a classroom, teaching and learning materials, salaries and buildings swallow up most of an educational budget. Few economies are possible, unless quality of education is sacrificed. With print and broadcasts, however, the marginal cost of each additional student is very small. Indeed, if radios are widely distributed, it costs no more to broadcast to a million students within reach of a transmitter than to a hundred. In theory, then, distance teaching can bring economies of scale to education (Perraton, 1982). In the Middle East refugee camps, for example, it was possible to compare directly the cost of producing a trained teacher through pre-service, residential courses and through in-

service, distance teaching courses. The cost of the latter was half that of the former (Lyle, 1967). A study of the costs of the British Open University showed that it could expect to produce graduates at a substantially lower cost than the regular British Universities (Wagner, 1972). A case in point is the Open University:

The Open University produces graduates much more cheaply than do other universities. ... And the students are working adults, who continue to contribute to the economy while earning their degrees. The University achieves additional economies by its method of course production: a relatively small central academic staff produce teaching materials that reach a large student population. The use of correspondence courses and broadcasting imposes a high fixed cost of production, but allows major economies of scale as student numbers rise. The cost of producing a course unit is (virtually) the same for one student or thousands (The Open University, 1978).

Reports on open universities tend to show that they have lower costs per student than conventional universities. The Chinese television universities are the supreme, and largest, example. Their recurrent cost per student was between 25 and 40 per cent of that for conventional universities. The reduced cost reflected both a less generous staffing ratio and lower costs for building space. The universities were operating at a scale that justified the necessarily heavy costs of broadcasting over 5500 hours of television a year. Other Asian open universities have reported costs per head that compare favourably with those of the conventional sector. In Korea the cost to the government of the (then) Korean Air and Correspondence University in 1990 was US \$93. Student fees made up half the income of the university, which suggests an annual cost per student of \$186 (\$232). The cost of a conventional university place was \$ 2880 (\$ 3591) (Kim, 1992: 38). Early figures from Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Thailand (STOU) suggested that the annual cost per head was between 21 and 30 per cent of the cost of conventional universities (US \$ 152-221 in 1986 prices (\$226-329) and between \$ 589 and 1010 (\$1280-1502) at conventional universities (Wichit, 1985: 27). Later figures from India show that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University, the longest established open university in India, was operating at about 15 per cent of the cost of conventional universities while, the then smaller, Indira Gandhi National Open University had costs of around 40 per cent of the conventional sector (Perraton, 2000: 132).

Two general conclusions can be drawn. The first concerns the level of education. Usually, the more advanced an educational course, the more the teachers working on it are paid. As staff salaries are such a large item in most educational budgets, the total cost of more advanced courses tends to reflect the higher salaries (in the case of universities, the expensive equipment and facilities required by the university teachers ensures that their total budget is also high). In distance teaching, many of the costs are the same regardless of the level at which courses are offered. The cost of preparing courses, or broadcasting lessons, or setting up a print shop does not depend upon the level at which the courses are pitched. It is thus much easier for distance teaching costs to look favourable when compared with the costs of higher education than when compared with secondary or even more, primary education costs. At the lower levels, larger numbers of students are needed to make the costs of production and equipment look reasonable.

The second point is related. The structure of costs of distance education differs from the structure of costs of ordinary education in schools or colleges. Whereas staff costs generally dominate educational budgets, costs for the production of materials, and for specialized plant and equipment, form a much larger proportion of the costs of a distance teaching project. If, therefore, the costs of distance teaching are compared favourably with the costs of ordinary face-to-face education, then the staff costs for the face-to-face elements in a distance teaching alternative must be kept down by employing teachers or tutors for a smaller number of contact hours, or by employing less-qualified teachers who will work at a lower rate of pay. The caveats must be noted. First, if some form of face-to-face instruction or tutoring is included (and experience suggests that they should be), system costs will rise in proportion to the number of students. Also, the addition of television, cassette recorders or other relatively sophisticated learning technologies can be expected to raise system costs significantly. Distance teaching, then, can be effective and can extend education far beyond the confines of schools or colleges and can be related to community needs and interests. It can do all things cheaply. However, the result will not be the same if we have to provide anew the schools, the libraries or the network of teachers or extension agents which orthodox education and extension requires. We need to use what is already there. Experiences of many projects suggest that, in many communities, there are resources that are under-used (Sewart *et al.*, 1984: 40). In most communities there

are resources that can be used to support distance learning, to its educational and economic advantage.

2.3.3. Why governments and many institutions have invested in distance education

There are three arguments for investment and adoption of distance education. Ideological arguments, often to do with equity or empowerment; economic arguments, often about equipping the workforce; and political arguments, which are about meeting demands to access to education to large segments of the population and in particular the disadvantaged groups (Manjulika and Reddy, 1996: 78-79).

Some governments have invested in distance education for explicit ideological reasons, most often in pursuit of equity or in a stronger formulation, with the intention of empowering poor, remote and disadvantaged people. Because of its technology, distance education was seen as something that could narrow the distance between privilege and poverty. The founding vice-chancellor of the (now) Allama Iqbal Open University, for example, gave a political reason for its establishment by the Pakistan People's Party. 'Being a socialist party, the main thrust of its manifesto was the socio-economic uplift of the masses, an idea that obviously included education' (Zaki, 1997: 29). There is a similar appeal to equity in the documents about many open universities (Perraton, 2000: 178).

With the possible exception of South Africa, where the SACHED (South African Committee for Higher Education) trust ran distance-education programmes during the apartheid regime which were aimed at empowerment, few other distance-teaching institutions have had as direct and radical an ideological agenda. Statements by the African Pourle Development Economique et Social (INADES-formation), for example, suggest that their aim is one of increasing participants' control over their own lives, and supporting community institutions, but remaining well short of social transformation. In the early years of independence, some African governments, notably Tanzania and Zimbabwe, emphasised the ideological case for adult education, as a means of equipping its people for citizenship. The Zambian National Correspondence College was founded as one response to this kind of concern (Siaciwena, 1994: 103-4). However, this is no longer the standard ideology of

educational planning (Perraton, 2000: 179). In tertiary education at least, economic statements about work force training are now more prominent than ideological ones. China, Iran and Sri Lanka, amongst others, have highlighted the economic case for using distance education. In Sri Lanka, for example, the vice-chancellor of the Open university commented that most higher education concentrated on traditional non-vocational courses while most of the open university programmes had been planned in the light of advice 'from those, especially in industry, who are the prospective employers of the Open University of Sri Lanka products' (Wijeyesekara, 1994: 107).

At other levels of education, too, labour market needs have been quoted as a reason for using distance education. Almost by definition, the programmes of teacher education were set up in response to the needs of the state as employer. At secondary level, some of the investment in distance education has been a response to the needs for a better-educated workforce. Thailand and Indonesia have used distance education to increase the number of workers with secondary qualifications (Perraton, 2000: 179).

Public demand, which governments cannot readily supply through the conventional system, has been a major justification for the creation of open universities. This is true in rich and poor countries alike. In Hong Kong, for example, alongside the expansion of the existing universities the (then) colonial government supported the establishment of an Open Learning Institute that was to become an open university (Swift, 1997: 129). In India, at the other extreme of wealth, a national education commission in 1964-5 'perceived correspondence education as an answer to the increasing pressure of numbers as well as the growing financial pressure on universities' (Manjulika and Reddy, 1996: 19). Twenty years later, in 1986, the national policy on education saw the new open university system as a way of widening opportunities for education because the conventional system could not meet the scale of demand (Swift, 1996: 78-79). In South Korea, the establishment of the Korea Air Correspondence University was one response to the problem that, despite a six-fold increase in college places since 1974, there were, by 1990, 544 000 unsuccessful applicants alongside the 344 800 who were admitted (NIME, 1993: 142).

An alternative explanation for government investment, especially in open universities, is that it provides a safety valve, apparently reducing unsatisfied demand for education, with the minimum of resources and little concern for the effectiveness of that education. Open and distance learning may be there to satisfy a demand or to contain it (Perraton, 2000: 181). It can also be said that distance education has been introduced to respond to growing educational needs which are not easily met or which are impossible to meet in traditional forms of education. Some of these needs are: to have courses for students to learn in scattered communities covering sparsely populated, large geographical areas such as found in Australia, Canada, North America; the training of teachers who are already working and cannot be taken away for more than a few weeks; the provision of educational opportunities for adults who have been deprived of education; the acceleration of manpower development; increasing the output of educational systems; to bring into the classroom expert knowledge, rare experiences and stimulating personalities; to update knowledge and skills; to initiate national campaigns which deal with health and political issues; and to have a cost-effective programme for large numbers of students (Gachui and Matiru, 1989:12).

2.3.4. The utilisation of distance education in the developed and developing

The 1995 World Bank paper, *Priorities and Strategies in Education*, identified major challenges with regard to access, equity and quality in education for what it sees as 'overlapping disadvantaged groups', sometimes called 'under-served groups'. These are defined as 'the poor, linguistic and ethnic minorities, nomads, refugees, and street and working children' (World Bank, 1995: 3). Chief among these are girls and women, whose education is seen as key to reducing fertility, improving the health of the whole population, and increasing gross domestic product (GDP) (World Bank, 1995: 28-31, 113-14). In this particular approach to equity and social inclusion, the use of distance education through new information and communication technologies (NICT) is confidently claimed to improve the quality of provisions to 'the marginal.'

New technologies stand to improve the efficiency of education through software tools that improve student performance and through new means of providing instruction and educational resources to under-served populations. (World Bank, 1995: 84).

Distance education in many countries has been developed as a means of making education available to those who have been deprived of it by elitist social and political systems. Disparities among ethnic groups in any given society are also marked, overall in terms of human poverty and likewise in terms of basic education. There is no global index possible for such disparities, but the situation in various countries can be considered indicative. For example, in South Africa, about eight per cent of Whites lack an education, contrasted with sixteen per cent of Blacks. In Mexico, indigenous children receive on average three years less education than non-indigenous children. In Guatemala, the majority of indigenous people have no formal education. Only 40 per cent are categorised as literate. In industrialised countries there are equivalent gaps. For example, in the United States 31 per cent of Hispanics aged 25 to 65 have not completed ninth grade, whereas only six per cent of Whites have not (all figures are cited in UNDP, 1997: 43). Differences in language and culture are contributing factors to these disparities. Those who speak a language other than one designated as 'official' are likely to be disadvantaged in terms of access to basic education, as are those whose cultural practices, values and world views mark them as out of the mainstream population for whom educational systems and programmes have been designed (Perraton, 2000: 54-55).

Evidence based on analyses of early intakes suggested that less than ten per cent of UKOU (United Kingdom Open University) students were themselves working class. However, if the same criteria were used to analyse class background as are traditionally used for conventional university students, that is social class of parents, then 45-50 per cent of Open University (OU) students came from working class backgrounds compared to 20-23 per cent of conventional university entrants. These numbers, when compared to the actual numbers of students in conventional universities, probably represent the biggest shift in class distribution of higher education in British educational history. They certainly suggest that the OU has been reasonably successful at attracting people who are themselves already upwardly mobile (Dodds, 1972; Lallez, 1973).

In Pakistan, a study funded by the International Development Research Centre of Canada and carried out by the research and evaluation department of the Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) established that 47 per cent of AIOU's completing students

come from rural areas and 40 per cent of completing students are women. Both of which show that the AIOU is reaching and retaining high numbers of students from two traditionally deprived sections of society. The Mexican Telesecundaria was established in 1966 with a pilot group of 6, 500 as a response to the lack of secondary schools in rural areas, and attracted the poorer and more remote students (Perraton, 2000). In central Africa, too many countries felt unable to cope with the demand for education by expansion of schools, even over the time span of a generation or more (Perraton, 1982). Distance education was chosen as the alternative method, and the study centre model was the organisational structure established in Malawi and Zambia. It is equally clear that the radio Schools of Latin America, Radioprimeria and Telescundaria of Mexico and the supervised study groups of Zambia and Malawi have extended educational opportunities to quite large numbers of children and adults who were previously deprived because of the social class into which they were born. Distance education has in these ways helped to break class restrictions on educational selection.

However, the overall impact of distance education on class barriers to educational opportunity has been disappointingly small. At best it can claim to have extended educational opportunities, in industrialised societies, to the peripheries of the middle and lower middle classes and, in developing societies, to the extension of the educational elites. Its major characteristic, the ability to provide education to students who are at a distance from potential teachers, has been successfully exploited to reach people in isolated rural communities with services more readily available in towns (Robinson and Dodds, 1989). For example, the Australian School of the Air provided primary education by two-way radio to the children of isolated sheep farmers in the Australian outback. The Radio Schools of Colombia and Honduras provide literacy and primary school equivalency to children and adults in isolated mountain-bound homesteads. Tanzania provides in-service training to apprentice teachers in remote rural primary schools. All these have made significant contributions to lessening the urban/rural divide, which is a characteristic of many developing societies.

Another important achievement has been the ability of distance education, not always exploited, to help overcome educational inequality between men and women (Edirisingha, 2000). At the adult level, of the more than 840 million adults (those

aged 15 and over) in the developing world who can neither read nor write, 538 million are women (UNDP, 1997: 30). At the child level, UNICEF estimates that two thirds of out-of-school children are girls (Bellamy, 1997: 52). In the developing world, rural-urban differences in literacy are stark. According to the UNDP figures, in developing countries 43 per cent of rural men are illiterate, more than twice the share in urban areas, and for women the illiteracy rate stands at 66 per cent and 38 per cent for rural and urban areas respectively (UNDP, 1997: 42). Research on the student body of AIOU showed that AIOU is successfully reaching women in rural Pakistan and enables them to overcome the cultural and social barriers, which have traditionally prevented them from getting secondary and higher education. A study of women students in the Technology Foundation Course of the British Open University concluded:

Powerful factors inhibit women students from considering the technology foundation course as a feasible choice...Yet the results of this survey of women who were studying the course could be used to encourage others (Swarbrick, 1980).

Also, there is significant evidence that, at least in industrialised societies, women who have not gone onto higher education as teenagers and who wish to develop new careers after bringing up a family, are gaining access to higher qualifications through distance education (Rumble, 1992).

Another small-scale, but vitally important, contribution by distance education to the democratisation process is its use in the education of disabled people (Rumble, 1992; Edirisingha, 2000). The British Open University has accepted the mandate of providing opportunities for university education to people who are severely handicapped and cannot thereby attend conventional university courses, and it is doing so with impressive success. In Kenya and Tanzania the Hadley Correspondence School for the Blind (as in its parent body in America) is providing correspondence courses translated into Braille, leading to secondary-level. National d'Enseignement a Distance (CNED) offers distance education courses to children who are either temporarily or permanently unable to attend school because of sickness.

Distance education, in the last decade, has shown itself to be capable of being used in, or immediately after, international emergencies to provide education to possibly the

most disadvantaged community on earth, refugees or displaced people, who through civil war, political oppression or economic disaster and deprivation, have been forced to leave their homes, their belongings and their means of livelihood (Rumble, 1992; Thomas, 1996). The majority of such people are citizens of developing countries and are forced to settle in countries which cannot meet the educational needs of their own people, let alone those of large numbers of refugees. A very large number of them are young children, of primary school age, or teenagers whose secondary schooling has been interrupted by their flight, or adults who have never been to school but whose life in exile requires wholly new social and economic skills.

For such people, from at least four countries, distance education has provided educational openings, which would otherwise have been denied. We have seen how in Somalia, a distance education teacher-training programme has enabled 160, 000 refugee primary teachers to be trained, and through them, 10, 000 children a year attend primary school. The same project has also enabled 10, 000 illiterate adults to attend functional literacy classes in four years. In Zambia and Angola, between 1984 and 1989, approximately 20, 000 young Namibian adult refugees were enrolled in junior secondary programmes by the Namibian Extension Unit, using distance learning materials in self-help study groups. Similar programmes were being operated for South African refugees in Tanzania and other frontline states, by the South African Extension Unit. In Sudan, the Sudan Open Learning Unit provides education for refugees from Eritrea and Ethiopia and displaced Southern Sudanese. The great strengths of distance education methods for such refugee communities are their flexibility and their ability to cater for large numbers of students with very limited numbers of teachers (Rumble, 1992).

Open education approaches tend towards offering opportunities for nomads to access education in the course of their normal migratory movement, rather than demanding that they settle in one place or attend a rigid institutional programme such as a boarding school (Rumble, 1992). To the extent that open and distance education strategies achieve this flexibility, they could be seen as supporting the preservation of the learners' nomadic lifestyle and culture, in contrast to conventional school attendance, which would tend to breakdown traditional behaviour patterns such as migration, herding and clan-based cultural intercourse (Pennells and Ezeomah, 2000).

In developed world, primary and secondary education is compulsory and universal. All children have equal opportunity to attend and to benefit from such education. In theory they all have an equal chance to move on to tertiary education if they are academically skilled enough to do so. However, in practice all kinds of non-educational considerations affect their academic careers: social and economic conditions, family circumstances and interests in education, varying speeds of intellectual development and maturity, career motivation. Many people do not obtain academic qualification at secondary level or access to tertiary education but at a later stage of their lives, want or need to do so. Distance education has traditionally provided, and continues to provide, such people with a second (or third) chance to further their education later in their lives, and to do so without seriously disrupting their existing jobs or neglecting their family responsibilities (Dodds, 1985; Rumble, 1992). Most of the American commercial correspondence colleges fit into this category, as do many of the more recent public correspondence institutions in Africa (Dodds, 1985).

Similarly, many thousands of young people in developing countries who gain places at junior secondary schools do not complete their courses successfully because of poor educational grounding in primary school, inadequate teaching and facilities in their junior secondary school, or pressure from home to begin to meet economic responsibilities. Part-time study centres, study groups and distance education courses are giving such people a second chance to achieve their qualifications and perhaps to re-enter the formal school system. Examples are cases in Pakistan, Malawi and India (Robinson and Dodds, 1989). Two of the most out-standing examples of distance teaching being used as a secondary school substitute for young adult school leavers are the Malawi Correspondence College and the Zambian National Correspondence College, both of which have set up a network of supervised study groups in order to provide more structure and support for their young students (Dodds, 1985).

Second chance educational opportunities are an important contribution in any society to the democratisation of access to education. For it is often only as adults that people fully realise what they want to do with their lives, and their potential to do it. Unless educational opportunities exist which allow them to further their education and to get training at the point at which they recognise their needs and potential, even if such

opportunities were available to them earlier, when they were still at school, such people can be classified as educationally deprived. The societies to which they belong, moreover, will also be deprived of the skills and productive contributions which second chance education and training can develop. In other words, distance education can provide people with a second chance at a college education, reach those disadvantaged by limited time, distance or physical disability, and update the knowledge base of workers at their work places of employment (Gottschalk, 2003).

Distance education has been used frequently to train new teachers and to up-grade existing ones, particularly to meet the current up-surge in the need for primary education as a consequence of trends in population growth, (as in Kenya, Pakistan, Tanzania and Zimbabwe) (Robinson and Dodds, 1989; Rumble, 1992; Perraton, 2000: 8). Examples of primary school teacher in-service upgrading programmes are found in Pakistan, Kenya, Uganda, Botswana and Swaziland (Perraton, 2000: 58). During the 1969-72 period, over 10, 000 unqualified teachers successfully completed retraining courses through radio, correspondence and residential study in Kenya. Large-scale retraining of teachers has since been attempted in Zimbabwe through the Zintec programme and in Brazil through the Logos II project, but the results of these efforts have been less well documented (Mayo, 1989). In Nigeria, Colombia and Pakistan, university level programmes have been used to upgrade secondary school teachers. More recently, distance teaching has been used to provide initial training to apprentice teachers recruited and put them straight into schools, as a way of enabling the spread to schools to take place immediately, without waiting for teachers to receive pre-service training in college in the traditional way. This pattern has been used, for example, among Palestinian refugees in Somalia by the Middle East in the UNRWA-UNESCO programme, and with refugees in Somalia by the Institute of In-service Teacher Training. It has also been used in Tanzania as a way of moving rapidly towards universal primary education (Dodds, 1985).

The impact of distance education on teacher education, particularly in developing countries, has been considered and valuable. It has been the means of improving the quality of the teaching force on a large scale in Zimbabwe, Kenya, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Guyana, among others. It has proved effective in increasing the academic knowledge base of the teachers at primary and secondary levels, in spreading new

curriculum developments rapidly on a national basis, and in providing qualifications for teachers while they continue to teach, often in needy rural locations (Robinson and Dodds, 1989).

2.4. Education in Africa

The African continent is facing one of the most daunting developmental challenges of the globe. Improving access to education is undoubtedly one of the highest priorities of capacity building on the continent. However, this must be achieved in the context of the following restraints: some of the most highly-indebted poor countries of the globe; severely declining quality of education provision; rapidly increasing population growth; and poor information communications infrastructure. For example, in 1998, the tertiary education gross enrolment ratio for Sub-Saharan Africa is 3.6 per cent when compared with other developing regions—for example, the Arab States (14 per cent), Asia (10.4 per cent) and Latin America (18.4 per cent) (UNESCO, 1998). Based on the demographic population profiles of the traditional 18-23 year-old cohort of higher education, many African countries will have to double their access to higher education by the year 2010. William Saint, Senior Education Specialist at the World Bank, argues that “local demands to expand tertiary enrolments in Africa will constitute a political time-bomb” (World Bank, 1999).

There are some countries that have achieved high enrolment in primary education (90 per cent), including Zimbabwe, Malawi, South Africa, Cape Verde Islands, Mauritius and Botswana (Machipisa, 2000). However, the overall enrolment is still only 60 per cent in most of Africa. That translates into 40 million children who do not go to school. According to Monsen Nina (1999), in Sub-Saharan Africa, 39 per cent of primary school-age boys and 45 per cent of primary school age girls are out of school. The United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) stated in the *state of the world's children 1999 report* that nearly one billion people in the world, which amounts to about 20 percent of humanity, are already classified as functionally illiterate. Two-thirds of them are women. According to the UNICEF report, the quality of education is often very poor including in Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon and the Comoros Island. There are still many factors today including poverty, bad educational policies, war and conflicts that keep many children from going to school. An expert in education, Sara Ruto (Women's International Network News, 1999) from Kenya,

explains that one reason why education in so many African countries is very poor is that the 1980s structural adjustment programs (SAPs) were introduced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. As a result all social services that formerly were free have to be paid for including health care and education. The expenses for education are very hard on parents and those unable to pay were simply excluded (Women's International Network News, 1999). Education for all is no longer an option. In Tanzania, the government devotes three times more to debt servicing than to education, on which spending has dropped two thirds in a decade. In Zambia, where debt repayment now costs 10 per cent of GDP, spending on schools has fallen. By 1996, over 550 000 Zambian children aged between six and eleven were out of school. Even so, Zambia harboured a hefty defence budget. Indeed defence spending as a share of GDP rose from 1.1 per cent in 1985 to 1.8 per cent in 1996 and in Tanzania it was at 3.3 per cent of GDP in 1996. Yet lack of money keeps children out of school (The Economist, 1999; Machipisa, 2000).

There is inadequate teaching staff in numbers and qualification. The predominance of unqualified teachers (in some countries up to 45-55 per cent) in secondary schools is a nightmare to the organisation of teaching-learning activities and educational delivery services. The scarcity of teachers is worse in Science, Mathematics and technology subjects which are not only preferred by parents, but are also vital to fulfill the objectives of most current national policies. The phenomenon of inadequate qualified teachers is a reflection not only of the teacher training programmes, but also of the poor employment and wage structure provided for teachers (UNESCO, 1997:206). The material resources needed for effective organisation of education are dangerously limited. Very few countries have adequate classrooms, furniture, laboratories and workshop equipment, libraries, and hostels to cater for the teeming population of students. Student-classroom ratios are unacceptably high on average and student-facilities (laboratory equipment) ratio lies at approximately 20 percent in many countries. Textbooks are in short supply and average is three students to one text. In many countries, the available school facilities are vandalised or destroyed during wars, civil unrest or even student riots. Parents and guardians are becoming increasingly incapable of providing basic facilities (uniform, textbooks, etc) for their children as a result of the economic situation and the general poverty across many countries (UNESCO, 1997:206).

A World Bank report on Africa had this to say:

Unfortunately tertiary institutions in their present form-overwhelmed with problems related to access, finance, quality, internal and external efficiency, are not up to the challenge. Enrolment levels are shockingly low. Limited space and declining budgetary levels prevent universities from servicing the growing demand for education. As a result, universities in Sub-Saharan Africa suffer from low numbers of trained faculty, virtually non-existent levels of research, poor quality educational materials (e.g. African libraries have suffered immensely as collections have become out of date and laboratory equipment is old, in disrepair and out of date), and outmoded program[me]s.... It is thus highly questionable whether tertiary institutions can afford to continue to develop under this traditional model of higher education, particularly if the countries of Africa wish to expand more than marginally access to higher education while maintaining quality' (Daniel, 1997).

The damage sustained by under-resourcing the universities during the years of economic decline, in almost all Sub-Saharan African countries, has been massive generally and in some areas debilitating. In fact, the first impression one gets of an African University campus in the 1990s is one of an all-pervading state of physical, managerial, and intellectual dilapidation. For the concerned Africans anywhere and the most senior academics in the older African universities, there is indeed an unmistakable sense of loss, amounting almost to grief, as they compare the present state of their universities with the vigor, optimism and pride which these same institutions displayed twenty or thirty years ago (Ajayi *et al.*, 1996: 145)

Also, in much of Africa, the state of schooling is dire. All over Africa everyday children walk or run for miles to reach decrepit buildings, which often keep off the sun and rain. There may be no water or electricity and not enough benches or desks. Books and equipment, if any are shared in classes up to 1000. Sport is kicking a ball of wrapped-up rags around a stony field. In some areas schools have to take one set of pupils in the morning, another set in the afternoon, and many children do not get there at all (The Economist, 1999). UNICEF facts and figures 1998 gave the following example of school experience in Zambia:

The average pupil walks seven kilometres everyday morning in order to get to school, has not eaten, is tired, undernourished, suffers from intestinal worms and is sweating and lacks concentration on arrival. He or she sits with 50 other pupils in a similar poor condition. Their receptivity is minimal The teacher is poorly educated, badly motivated and underpaid. He speaks bad English but still tries to teach in that language. He does not know his subjects well and

uses poor teaching methods during teaching (Monsen, 1999; see also Sinyangwe, 2002).

Yet, in spite of this grim picture, the thirst and demand for education is still very much there across Africa and parents and communities continue to make huge sacrifices in a bid to secure some education for their children. This is because with education there is hope for a job, a better job and a brighter future. What needs to be stressed here is that education, even basic education in most parts of Africa, cannot be taken for granted; and formal education in particular, with a qualified teacher and appropriate texts, is becoming increasingly inaccessible and beyond the financial reach of the majority. Under the circumstances, both governments and the public are now slowly coming round to accept the need to look seriously at and try out alternative but viable and especially cost-effective strategies to provide this much sought after education (Kala, 1995). So, open and distance education strategies in Africa, be they for basic education, primary, secondary, tertiary, technical education and training must focus on mitigating/alleviating major education problems confronting policy-makers, education administrators, and deal with fundamental issues of access, mass education, relevance, quality, equity and above all cost effectiveness.

Distance education strategies in Africa will be seen as an attractive alternative or as complimentary delivery systems because they address such issues and also because they are or ought to be cost effective. Over the last few years, there have been positive initiatives and developments in distance education at the tertiary level. An example is the establishment of OUT (the Open University of Tanzania) (Perraton, 2000) whose initial course offer was a Bachelor of Arts with an education option mainly for secondary school teachers. This university will play an important role within the framework of the Regional Programme for the Development of Distance Education in Africa (RPDDEA) as envisaged by UNESCO. In other countries, several universities have set up distance learning units (dual mode-offering both conventional and distance education courses), often with technical and professional support input from the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). Some of these include Makerere University, Uganda; University of Nairobi, Kenya; University of Zimbabwe and Freeretown Teachers' College, Sierra Leone. Most of these institutions are concentrating their

efforts mainly on in-servicing their teachers and providing them with appropriate academic and professional qualifications. So access to university education, in some disciplines, is being widened in a much quicker and more cost-effective way. Such programmes no doubt are making a significant contribution towards increasing access as well as improving the overall quality of education (Kala, 1995).

As regards general education, the picture does not appear to be that encouraging. Various initiatives at post-primary level, where the need for alternative and cheaper education provision is great, have met with only limited success. In East Africa and Southern Africa, for example, several countries (Zambia, Malawi, Lesotho, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zimbabwe) have established distance education institutions, either as separate entities or as adjuncts of education ministries. Their main objective is to provide alternative formal schooling, particularly at secondary level, to thousands of primary school learners who cannot go to conventional schools because they are unaffordable or simply because they are not there. Problems besetting such institutions include inadequate and insufficient resources (material, financial and human), lack of expertise and appropriate training, as well as negative attitudes towards distance learning strategies on the part of policy and decision-makers. Yet, at a time when Africa is struggling through its most devastating economic crisis, more rather than less use should be made of such alternative delivery systems. For, when properly planned, staffed and implemented and with economies of scale, these programmes can be both cost and educationally effective, and can make a positive contribution towards educational access, relevance and quality (Kala, 1995).

The recent establishment of the multi-channel learning base (MCLB) for East and Southern Africa (Harare) is a major and positive initiative in the area of distance education in Africa. The project's main focus is to reinforce and extend as well as improve the capacities of institutions/programmes involved in alternative, open distance learning and multimedia strategies in an effort to concretise the Jomtien Declaration of Education For All by the year 2000 (now) 2015. The project was developed by UNESCO, Harare office for Southern Africa, together with the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE) and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The initiative may be replicated in other parts of the continent in future. Its establishment is seen as a significant impact on access,

efficiency and learning outcomes, particularly in terms of basic and general education (Kala, 1995).

Another initiative is the African Virtual University (AVU). The African Virtual University, a “university without borders,” uses information and communication technologies to provide Africa direct access to global knowledge and learning resources (Prakash, 2003). The AVU was established in 1997 as a World Bank supported initiative to tap global knowledge and learning networks to meet Africa’s educational needs (Prakash, 2003). The mission of the African Virtual University Project is to use the modern information technology to increase access to educational resources throughout South Saharan Africa (SSA). The use of information technology will enable higher education institutions to supplement their existing programmes with resources of a global “Virtual University” (African Virtual University, 1998; Perraton, 2000). African Virtual University supplements existing university programmes with high-quality courses, while introducing new cost-efficient programmes. From an initial summer course at Kenyatta University in July 1997, AVU now offers undergraduate and remedial courses as non-credit programmes to sixteen universities in Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 1998). Africa Virtual University’s curriculum includes foundation courses in calculus, differential equations, physics, chemistry, and statistics as well as courses in computers and engineering.

To implement AVU, the World Bank established a small core team supported by international consultants experienced in academia, distance learning, library systems, networking systems, and network operational management. Partner institutions in Africa provide academic, administrative, technical, and student support services as well as the infrastructure needed for AVU operations at the country level. These institutions receive all training and support needed to implement AVU. The AVU project is in three phases. The first phase, which is prototype, was started from the beginning of the first semester of the 1997/1998 academic year (African Virtual University, 1998). The countries in South Saharan Africa which are participating in the pilot phase of Africa Virtual University programme include: Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe (African Virtual University, 1998; Prakash, 2003).

A number of course providers were identified from all over the world and courses were broadcast live from the US, Canada and Europe to students in the partner institutions, who could participate in a live virtual discussion across Africa and beyond. Gradually the focus has shifted towards building the capacity of local African institutions to generate their own courses for the AVU on local issues, such as the use of indigenous knowledge in the development process. Also knowledge has to be contextualised in order to add value to a different setting. Some of the courses had to be revised to address the level of knowledge and understanding of students in different parts of Africa. These were benchmarked by the local course facilitators, who ensured that students were able to follow the courses and provided backstopping support to bridge any gaps in understanding (Prakash, 2003). In 2001, the AVU embarked on a partnership with the Medical University of South Africa (MEDUSA) through a Memorandum of Understanding. The University operates a Public Health Programme in the Southern Africa region and the AVU has agreed to jointly develop courses for dissemination through the AVU network. This will be done in collaboration with universities in the US, which will enable the programme to access a wider audience across Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. Similar partnerships have been forged with the United Negro College Fund and the Africa-American Institute. In this way, the AVU helps development practitioners, access global communities, and share knowledge and experiences through the virtual centers; which in turn will hopefully lead to the emergence of common goals, joint ventures and partnerships to promote sustainable development (Prakash, 2003).

Having briefly documented the educational situation in Africa, it is felt that a detailed analysis of general education and distance education in South Africa should be provided since South Africa has a slightly different educational scenario from the other African countries and more importantly, South Africa is the focus of this study. Therefore, in the next section of this study, the history of education and distance education standing in South Africa will be mapped.

2.5. The educational situation in South Africa

The roots of formal education in South African can be traced back to 17th century with the Dutch settlement at the Cape (Behr, 1988: 11; Malherbe, 1925: 7). Dutch-religious education modelled after, or rather transplanted from the Netherlands was established.

In the latter half of the 17th and 18th centuries, the church was the dominant element in education. Ignorance and a lack of knowledge beyond what was required for purely religious purposes were prevalent amongst the common people (Malherbe, 1925: 19). Education was provided on only small scale until well into the second half of the 19th century. The curriculum of the school included conscious, and to a certain extent obligatory preparation for participation in the service of public worship (Malherbe, 1925: 21). It was not only until the 1820s that the system of secular schools in the British tradition, sponsored by the Governor, Lord Charles Somerset, began to take shape (Behr, 1988: 11). Then, the appointment in 1939 of an impartial full-time official, known as the superintendent general of education, signalled the transfer of responsibility for education from church to state. A system of grant-in-aid to schools established through local endeavour was instituted in the Cape colony. This gave rise to the evolution of a similar system in Natal and the Boer republics (Behr, 1988:12). The history of education in South Africa during the latter half of the 19th century and early part of the 20th century clearly reflects the educational adaptations of a changing society (see Behr, 1988:12).

Racially differentiated education in South Africa became entrenched when the Nationalist party government was elected in 1948. The National Party government legitimised race as the defining category that determined place of residence, occupation and certainly the nature of education (Prinsloo, 1999). Apartheid education consequently resulted in a cumbersome bureaucracy defined by race and geography. Educational authorities were classified as White, Indian, Coloured and Black. The differential funding to White, Indian, Coloured and Black education reflected the official social hierarchy where Whites received the highest per capita rate of funding, and where Indians and Coloureds were offered a degree of elevation beyond the status offered to Africans (Ural, 1991; Gerwel, 1994: 82; Prinsloo, 1999; Steyn, 1999: 66). Bantu education, for example, was modelled in such a manner as to deprive the majority of any meaningful role in the public life of South African society.

The consequences of this was the impossibility for the black majority, of any social mobility and the official exclusion of certain races from the business of the city. One must also mention the absence of democratic control within the system of education

and training. The students, the teachers, the parents, in brief, the majority of the social partners were excluded from the management of the system. Fragmentation, exclusion, and the absence of democracy had a detrimental effect on the development of human resources and, in short resulted in a devastating effect on the society (UNESCO, 1997:187). Concerning the training of human resources, 64.4 per cent of the African population were illiterate before 1991. The school failure rate was much higher among Africans. Moreover, out of the 12, 000 chartered accountants only 25 per cent were African, 3.8 per cent only of the engineers were African, 1.9 per cent of the scientists, 12.5 per cent of the technicians, 6.7 per cent of the entire administrative system (UNESCO, 1997:184).

Apartheid education policy was not concerned with the provision of education as a basic human right to black people. Its aim was to produce a relatively low-skilled labour force and to reproduce the racially structured division of labour and the unequal social and political structures necessary for securing the privileged position of the White community (Gerwel, 1994: 84). So, the South African school system was race-based until the present government came into power. In the white paper on education and training (Republic of South Africa, 1995) and in the preamble to the *South African schools Act, 1996* (Act 84 of 1996) the government committed itself to eliminating the inequalities in provision of education as soon as possible. With the establishment of a new racially integrated provincial education system after the present government came to power, the inequalities in the provision of education in South African schools have not disappeared but have been carried over to the new departments. The most glaring inequalities amongst the provincial education departments, as far as school education is concerned, are the widely differing learner-educator ratios in the different provincial education departments (van Zyl, 1996; Steyn, 1999). The educational positions and practices inscribed within the erstwhile authorities cannot simply be erased (Prinsloo, 1999: 165).

Many schools and educational institutions which were meant for the deprived majority are still ill-equipped, and in many instances run by inadequately trained staff (Yule, 1987: 7; Gerwel, 1994: 82). In addition, a sizeable portion of the people who have been historically disadvantaged cannot read and/or write. Facilities for adult education are also few and far between, while student teacher ratio is decreasing and

the transition rate from the end of primary to secondary level is on the increase from an average of 14 percent in 1990 to over 20 percent in 1992. High repetition rate could be an easy pointer to a number of weaknesses in the system, ranging from inadequate curricula, lack of suitable teachers, materials and facilities, perhaps a problem of costs and financing of schools and the use of inappropriate pedagogy (UNESCO, 1997:197; Department of Education, 2000).

The Reconstruction and Development Programmes (RDP) policy framework document has this to say about education:

The fragmented, unequal and undemocratic nature of the education and training system has profound effects on the development of the economy and society. It has resulted in the destruction, distortion or neglect of the human potential of our country, with devastating consequences for the social and economic development. Apartheid education and its aftermath of resistance destroyed the culture of learning within large sections of our communities (ANC, 1994: 58).

It is clear that conventional educational systems will find it difficult to undo the evils of apartheid as well as address the educational crisis as it exists today. The structures that education has inherited from apartheid are difficult to eradicate. Christian National Educational philosophy with its built-in racism, fundamentalism and vision of a White history; fundamental pedagogics with its top-down, authoritarian methodologies, unable to grant the learner any autonomy or choice; and concepts of intellectual and educational privilege and capacity based on economic inequalities that have demoralised Black learners and given Whites a false sense of ability (van Zyl, 1996).

Census 1996 figures indicated that almost 20 per cent of South Africans aged 20 years and over have received no formal schooling, while only 24.2 per cent have some or completed primary education. In addition, approximately 40 per cent of South Africans have received some secondary education, but 6 percent have post-secondary qualifications (Statistics South Africa, 1998).

Even where people have completed some form of secondary schooling, such schooling do not necessarily lead to further learning opportunities or to employment, as the following statistics cited in the White Paper on Further Education and Training

demonstrates: “two million 16-27 year olds have completed nine or more years of schooling, but lack employment or meaningful opportunities to improve their knowledge, skills and qualifications”(Ministry of Education, 1998). Statistics such as these underscore why provision of education and training opportunities to adults and those youth who are not in the present schooling system is regarded as a national priority. For a long time, education for adults in South Africa has been marginalised through lack of access to resources, as well as lack of recognition in terms of its place in the broader education and training system. During apartheid, no coherent framework for provision or accreditation of education and training for adults, workers, and out-of-school youth existed. Where provision was offered by the state, it was generally fragmented and of poor quality. This meant that education provision for many South Africans was primarily made available by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (SAIDE, 1999: 5).

Although the RDP document is correct in prioritising the redressing of the imbalances of the past in terms of classroom provision, teacher training and educational provision for Black learners, attention must also be paid to the re-education of Whites who have passed through the Christian National Education system (van Zyl, 1996). At the same time as the country’s education and training system is expected to deal with this difficult process of transformation, however, it is being exposed to many other pressures which it shares in common with all educational and training systems around the world. These include: rapid development and convergence in functionality of information, communication, and broadcasting technologies; deteriorating boundaries of nationality and national markets; growing pressure on traditional education to provide access to far larger numbers of students, of all ages; a crisis of confidence in traditional approaches to education, which have often confused education with transfer of information; and dwindling funding, in real terms for education and training purposes particularly in the public sector (Butcher, 1998; Sedibe, 1998).

In common with many other countries, South Africa experiences a shortage of science and mathematics teachers (UNESCO, 1997: 206; Department of Education and Department of Communications, 2001: 9). In contrast to other countries, a great deal of the crisis facing science and mathematics education (SME) in South Africa is unique, arising through deliberate government policy traceable back to the days of

'grand apartheid' (Andrew, 1990: 25; Kahn, Volmink and Kibi, 1995). Many students in outlying areas are at a disadvantage because of a lack of qualified teachers. The national tragedy South Africa faces is well-summarised in a single statistic: the attainment of matriculation exemption with physical science and mathematics at higher grade among Black students is one-sixtieth that for White students, who are in the small minority. The situation is intolerable and weakens the country's potential to become a productive nation (Kahn, Volmink and Kibi, 1995). Reasons for this are complex, but include aversion to mathematics and simple matter of teacher shortage. The number of successful students is extremely low, but the absolute number taking the subject in 1995 was approaching 100 000 (Kahn, Volmink and Kibi, 1995). In seeking to address the need for human resource development, the science and mathematics education (SME) task team reached these conclusions: the small number of successful completers is a bottleneck to development; the shortage of teachers is a bottleneck to uptake; and those students who actually sit the examinations in physical science and mathematics are probably the top of their cohort in terms of ability (and staying power) (Kahn, Volmink and Kibi, 1995: 421).

In South Africa the term 'classroom backlog' is used to describe the discrepancies between the number of classrooms currently available and the number that would be required to accommodate current enrolments at more reasonable pupil to classroom ratios. Furthermore the usual measurements of the classroom backlogs do not take into account the continuous increase in school-age population and the additional facilities needed simply to keep up with population growth. The situation is exacerbated with pupils well over school-going age or who are repeating a grade. In 1996, it was thought that there was a backlog of 50 000 classrooms using a ratio of one classroom to forty pupils. If the number is decreased to a more acceptable 30 pupils per classroom then the backlog increases to 95 000 classrooms (van Zyl, 1996: 93). Further complicating the backlog issue is the lack of laboratories, equipment and libraries in many of the South African schools (van Zyl, 1996: 93). The greatest challenges lies in the poorer, rural provinces like the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal (Garson⁴), where many schools struggle for resources.

⁴ http://www.safrica.info/ess_info/sa_glanced/education/education.htm, date accessed 19/4/2004.

To address the severe backlog in school infrastructure, RDP funds to the total value of about R 1.6 billion were allocated in the 1994/95, 1995/96 and 1996/97 financial years to provincial education facilities. Owing to the substantial bureaucratic measures imposed on the utilisation of RDP funding in these years, as well as the lack in reliable information to determine the school areas with the greatest need, it took very long to utilise these funds. It will be shown that these amounts were in any case totally inadequate, to eliminate or even to alleviate the problem of existing and annually increasing backlogs in school buildings, equipment and other fixed assets (Steyn, 1999: 67). However, according to the 2000 school register of needs report (Department of Education, 2000), nationally, the proportion of schools reporting classroom shortages dropped by 10 per cent from 1996 to 2000, and classroom backlogs have been vigorously addressed in the rural provinces. No doubt, redressing the resource imbalances is a slow and a difficult process, but significant inroads have been made (Garson⁵).

In the report of the educational sectoral team (1997) which forms part of the government's medium-term expenditure framework (MTEF) for the 1998/1999, 1999/2000 and 2000/2001 financial years, it is stressed that solutions to the problems of the education system (like the elimination of inequalities) do not lie in the budget domain alone. In addition to the need for the better management of personnel and financial matters by provincial education departments, solutions to the problems of over-enrolment in school system (relative to learner age group) and low productivity of educators (sometimes as a result of classroom shortages) need to be found urgently (van Vuuren; 1987: 157; Steyn, 1999). There is no doubt that much of the education that is being offered in schools does not equip the students for later life. They go on to try to find work, and the education they have received frequently does not equip them for their work or for their further studies (Andrew, 1990: 29).

Transmission education has dominated the formal education arena and the locus of power for curriculum development was in the hands of the White Afrikaners. This form of education assumes a realist conception of knowledge where reality is assumed to be discoverable and can be represented. The teacher and the text are acknowledged

⁵ http://www.safica.info/ess_info/sa_glanced/education/education.htm date accessed 19/4/2004.

as authoritative and the intentions of learning is to approximate their knowledge rather than to interpret it (Prinsloo, 1999). Independent and creative thinking are disallowed within these terms. Teaching is carried out in a directive mode that is bureaucratic, authoritarian and, in the South African context, ideologically laden to serve the interests of the political minority (Prinsloo, 1999: 166). This teacher-centred approach to knowledge therefore proposes pedagogies that encourage rote learning and memorisation. This has been the prevalent approach in former Black state institutions, one that offers an extremely constrained vision of literacy quite inappropriate to the demands of the late twentieth century. The authoritarian nature of formal education emphasises the acceptance of wisdom of authority. Traditional African society tends to validate deference and obedience to elders. It disallows questioning of ideas or institutions. These factors impede critical debate and the kind of argument that would accompany the nurturing of critical literacy. Learners become dependent on certainty. They feel insecure to face open-ended questioning and opinions that are not reinforced as right or wrong.

In order for South African learners to be functional in their society, there should be a focus on transferable skills that support human development in a South African context. The way that people are examined /tested needs to be re-evaluated to include an assessment of how they are applying their knowledge, instead of testing for memory capacity. Many people lack basic life-skills relating to health care, sex education and knowledge of the legal system (for issues such as human rights, marriage, divorce and business). There is a lack of technological familiarity, computer literacy, and banking skills, amongst many others. The needs of adult basic education, early childhood educare, education for the physically challenged, teacher education, leadership training and further education, all need urgent attention (Mpofu, Manhando and Tomaselli, 1996: 278).

The underlying approach of the Reconstruction and Development Programmes (RDP) is that education and training should be available to all from the cradle to the grave (ANC, 1994). The RDP takes a broader view of education and training, seeing it not only as something that happens in schools or colleges, but in all rural areas. The RDP is aware of the fact that higher education is the essential weapon for development and

consolidation of the knowledge acquired at the cost of enormous sacrifices. Apartheid made it a privilege granted preferentially according to the colour of one's skin; the RDP wants to make it a right, insisting more on the possibilities of access than on the reasons for exclusion. It allows the great number to have access to education.

At the formal level, *The School Act of 1996* (Act No. 84 of 1996) (RSA, 1996) confirms equality of access (irrespective of race, gender, language, religion or culture), entrenching the right of every learner to 'quality education' and establishes procedures for the democratic governance of schools. Officially, outcome-based education is regarded as a key to improving quality at all levels of education and training. Key to this transformation is the replacement of the existing curricula with new ones which reflect the priorities and needs of South African society both in dealing with the effects of apartheid and in preparation for the future in a highly competitive, and rapidly changing, global environment. Several policy instruments turn on this notion, including the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), curriculum 2005 and the norms and standards for teacher education. Important though they are, formal changes cannot guarantee better practice, and where policy makers take little account of the context and agents of implementation, policy may impede rather than enable transformation (Enslin and Pendlebury, 1998).

As Pam Christie quoted in Enslin and Pendlebury (1998) shows, many historically black schools remain dysfunctional, despite changes in policy and laws. This so called 'breakdown' in the culture of teaching and learning is one of apartheid's more obstinate legacies, originating in the struggle students waged against apartheid from 1976 onwards. When schools function well, they provide an organisational environment for systematic, formalised teaching and learning. Time provides one constitutive framework for schooling, space another. Christie argues that boundary maintenance, in time and space, is critical to a well functioning school. Dysfunctional schools in South Africa transgress both sets of boundaries. Timetables are confused, days go by with no formal classes, absentee rates are high, problems from the local communities spill over into schools and violence is rife. Much the same might be said about dysfunctional colleges of education, as Shirley Pendlebury mentions in her brief account of apartheid's legacy in teacher education (Enslin and Pendlebury, 1998). Findings of a national teacher audit of primary and secondary teacher education in

1995 (an analysis of the current state of teacher education in South Africa), made it clear that tinkering with the existing system of teacher education was not going to provide adequate solutions to problems of teacher development. It also demonstrated that, despite pockets of excellence and innovation, the current system, on the whole, contradicted the values and principles outlined in the white paper on education and training (Hofmeyr and Hall, 1995).

In further education and training defined in *A Policy Framework for Education and Training* as the education level which follows the attainment of the general education certificate within the compulsory phase of schooling⁶ or through the Adult Basic Education and Training Programmes (ANC Education Department, 1994). This definition has been extended slightly by the NCHE (National Commission on Higher Education) report to allow for an area of further education between the further education certificate and the higher education sector (National Commission on Higher Education, 1996). In 1996, only a minority of those who completed the compulsory phase of schooling enrolled for further education and training. Therefore, there is an urgent need for further education and training to take place in a variety of contexts to enhance the development of the individual and ensure economic progress. It is also essential for members of the workforce to keep pace in scientific and technological change throughout the duration of their working lives.

In the Science, Engineering and Technology sector (this sector includes mathematics and computing), the ANC's policy framework concludes that:

In general, science, mathematics and technology education, both formal and non-formal, has failed to address our levels of scientific literacy and technological fluency. Among the newly industrialising countries, we are ranked bottom in terms of development of our human resources (ANC Education Department, 1994).

One third of the population is illiterate or semi-literate (UNFPA State of World Population, 2003; Population Reference Bureau Data Finder, 2000), forming the largest group for whom provision must be made. In 1998, 10 to 15 million adults in

⁶ Compulsory phase of schooling lasts for nine years (from age 6 to 15 years). It comprises primary education which lasts for six years and junior secondary education, which lasts three years. At the end of the junior secondary, pupils are awarded the General Education and Training Certificate (<http://216.239.59.104/search?q=cache:jQNcBZ4GP-4J:www.unesco.org/iau/cd-data/za> date accessed 10/3/2004).

South Africa lacked basic education or skills. On average 350, 000 adults take training courses each year, but the SAQA (South African Qualification Authority) expected that the figure will rise to 700 000 in 1998 and 2.5 million in 2001 (Vally and Khouri-Daghe, 1998). Because provision has been fragmented and usually separated from mainstream educational practices, policies and supporting structures will have to be established in order to redress the lack of basic education amongst all age groups of the population. A document published in September 1995, entitled *A National Adult Basic Education and Training Framework: Interim Guidelines*, focuses on the proposed standards (levels of learning) and outcomes for those participating in ABET programmes. The report found that in basic education initiatives, very little use has yet been made of open learning approaches, both for those in need of basic education and ABET educators. Because professional development for ABET educators has been largely neglected and their task is so immense given the excessive numbers of illiterate and semi-illiterate men and women in South Africa, conventional methods of providing professional development for these educators would prove inadequate (Department of Education, 1995).

The poor performance of education has contributed directly to the poor performance of the South African economy, which suffers from a skills shortage and inadequate productive capacity on the part of the majority of the population (Department of Education and Department of communications, 2000: 9; Jensen, 2002). The ability of this majority to contribute to economic growth and development is constrained severely by a lack of access to education. It is calculated that the illiteracy rate is 15 percent and 14 percent for adult females and males⁷ respectively (Population Reference Bureau Data Finder, 2000; UNFPA State of World Population, 2003). With regard to educational disadvantage, it is imperative to mention that the African population predominates.

Economic recovery and growth require investment in education and training for the rapid development of technical, managerial and entrepreneurial skills of the

⁷ Illiteracy rate for adult females and males means rates for women and men above 15 years of age who cannot, with understanding, both read and write a short statement on everyday life. Data is derived from estimates for the 1998-2001 period (Population Reference Bureau Data Finder, 2000; UNFPA State of World Population, 2003).

historically disadvantaged majority. This investment would have to be at all levels of education and training. The access of Blacks to higher education has to be dramatically accelerated as it is here that high-level human resource development has to occur. The quality of basic education, particularly in the crucial areas of science, mathematics and technology, needs to be dramatically enhanced. The skilling of the existing workforce requires resources for adult basic education and industrial training (Gerwel, 1994).

An urgent need was expressed by the government of national unity to institute both qualitative and quantitative changes to address the large numbers of under-educated South Africans. The white paper on education that has been referred to stressed the necessity for the following corner-stones of national educational provision: Life-long learning and training; a wide range of accessible levels of educational facilities; recognition of prior learning (RPL⁸); consultation with all educational stakeholders: learners, community groups, industry, and institutions; and utilisation of distance education and training strategies (van Zyl, 1996: 93).

The White Paper has identified distance education as an essential mechanism for achieving its goals, not only as a national educational strategy, but as a method to be adopted by a wide variety of educational and training organisations. It sees five areas of application:

- massive initial and in-service training of teachers;
- a key role in Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) with network of community learning centres;
- in further education providing a purposeful education delivery to learners at post-compulsory level irrespective of age, place and time of delivery;

⁸ RPL is a term in current usage in South Africa. It refers to practices developed within education and training to identify and recognise adults' previous learning. The basic premise is that learning acquired informally, non-formally, experientially or formally can and should be recognised and accorded currency within formal education and training frameworks. Similar practices are called the Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (APEL) in the United Kingdom (UK), Prior Assessment (PLA) in the United States of America (USA), Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) in Canada (<http://www.el.uct.ac.za/welcome.htm> date accessed 17/03/2004).

- the generation of a wide range of local study guides, video, computer packages etc applicable and appropriate to local needs; and providing a 'fresh start' to learners hostile to the methods associated with apartheid, and
- creating 'a new approach', an innovative climate to address the educational crisis (Van Zyl, 1996: 93).

If one takes all the problems that beset education in South Africa into consideration then it would appear that distance education has a significance because of its potential for delivering education to large numbers of learners at various places at an economical cost (Stoop, 1995: 50; Van Zyl, 1996: 94), and transforming the South African education and training system (Butcher, 1998; Perraton, 2000:183-184).

2.5.1. The distance education scenario in South Africa

A number of policy documents have emphasised the efficacy of distance education in the provision of learning opportunities for all. In tracing the growing emphasis, a good start point is the document entitled '*A Policy Framework for Education and Training*', which emanated from the education department in 1995. It devotes a chapter to open learning and distance education under the section entitled 'resources for learning'. The document recognises that radical transformation is imperative to meet the challenge of lifelong learning successfully and to reorganise the delivery of education and training within an open learning framework. In its mission statement, the document is unequivocal:

The development of a well-designed and quality distance education system based on the principles of open learning is the only feasible approach to meet the needs of the vast numbers of our people who were systematically deprived of educational opportunity in the past, while at the same time providing opportunities for the youth coming up through the educational system at present. It will allow people access to education and training and the ability to determine where, when, what and how they want to learn (ANC Education Department, 1994).

This approach to distance education was reinforced by the *White Paper on Education and Training* of March 1995. In this document, the Ministry of Education expressed its commitment to distance education. It recognised that the need for a "completely fresh approach...to the provision of learning opportunities,"(RSA, 1995) and

identified distance education as a crucial mechanism of change. The white paper considered distance education methods as appropriate and cost effective in a wide range of educational sectors:

Firstly the provision of quality basic education for all children will require massive initial and in-service training of teachers. The white paper suggests that distance education should play a major role in this task, but notes that the current provisions must be entirely transformed...

Secondly, the white paper envisages a key role for distance education in ABET programmes where appropriate...

Thirdly, the white paper notes that, at the Further Education Level, a comprehensive interlocking sector needs to be planned which provides a purposeful education experience to learners at the post-compulsory phase, irrespective of age, place, and time of delivery. The role of well-functioning distance education in developing this level is envisaged as being considerable.

Fourthly, the white paper suggests in its discussion of financial considerations that it should invest in research and development on the appropriateness of distance education strategies for different learning goals... it is hoped that distance education strategies will be cost-effective in meeting the anticipated vast demands from youth, women, workers and self-employed persons, and students at institutions.

Finally, and most importantly, the white paper states that "the dimensions of South Africa's learning deficit are so vast in relation to the needs of the people, the constitutional guarantee of the right to basic education, and the severe financial constraints on infrastructural development on a large scale, that a completely fresh approach is required to the provision of learning opportunities (RSA, 1995).

The principles underpinning open learning and distance education adumbrated in the policy framework document and the white paper on education and training are also clearly evident in the report of International Commission published in 1995 (SAIDE, 1994).

Similarly, the National Commission on Higher Education's (NCHE) Framework for Transformation incorporates distance education and also refers to resource-based learning. In its proposal for a single, coordinated system, the NCHE framework suggests "an expanded role for distance education and for high quality 'resource-based' learning" (National Commission on Higher Education, 1996). It also lists 'greater provision of distance education' as one of the mechanisms to be employed in

the creation of the system. The Commission considers it essential for the new system to include a far greater focus on distance education and resource-based learning as key mechanism, together with the increased recognition of prior learning and the articulation of qualification through the National Qualification Framework (NQF), for increasing access and enhancing openness and lifelong learning opportunities. Major concerns include the need for redress of past inequalities and the reduction of barriers to access and success:

A key challenge for higher education is to enhance the quality of higher education programmes and to improve success and throughput rates. This challenge must be met in the context of greatly increased access to a wide variety of students at varying entry levels, and within a higher education budget that increases significantly slower than enrolments rise. The Commission believes that distance education and resource-based learning are fundamental part of meeting this challenge, and that this will have major implications both for South Africa's well-established distance/correspondence institutions and for traditionally 'contact institutions (National Commission on Higher Education, 1996).

The Green Paper on Higher Education released by the Ministry of Education in December 1996 also supports the role of distance education and resource-based learning in higher education. "Distance education and resource-based learning have a crucial role to play in meeting the challenge of greater access and enhanced quality in a context of resource constraints and diverse students body" (Department of Education, 1996).

Also, there is much legislation, which currently governs the provision of education and training in South Africa. Legislation most relevant to the provision of education and training using distance education methods includes the following: *Universities Act* (Act 61 of 1955); *Correspondence Colleges Act* (Act 59 of 1965); *Technical Colleges Act* (Act 104 of 1981); *Technikon*⁹ *Act* (Act 125 of 1993); *South African*

⁹ Technikon is a purely South African term. They are distinguished from the universities not by the quality of their educational product, but rather by their focus on technology education, research and development (Daves, Goh, Malcolm and Uhl <http://idt.stanford.edu/~malcom/samplepages/pdfs/south%20Africa%20Distance%Education.pfd> date accessed 20/3/2004). Technikons courses lead to National Diploma and certificates and in 1995 to Degrees. Their emphasis is to offer career focused and technology-based education. Also, for university entrance, a matric "endorsement" is required (a minimum of three subjects passed at the higher, rather than standard, grade), although some universities do set their own additional academic requirements. A standard school-leaving South African senior certificate is sufficient for Technikon study (Garson, http://www.safrika.info/ess_info/sa_glanced/education/education.htm date accessed

Qualifications Authority Act (Act 58 of 1995); *National Education Policy Act* (Act 27 of 1996; *South African Schools Bill* (Act 58 of 1996); and *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (as adopted by the constitutional assembly on 8th May, 1996, amended on 11th October, 1996, and signed on 10th December 1996) (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

The National Education Department has also shown its commitment to improving the quality of distance education by launching a project aimed at developing quality standards for distance education. It is envisaged that these will provide guidelines for providers, learners, employers and the National Department itself in setting up and evaluating distance education provision. The National Association of Distance Education Organisation in South Africa (NADEOSA) was launched on 2nd of August 1996 with the aim of improving the quality of distance education in South Africa (Butcher, 1998).

Further, the White Paper on Education and Training (RSA, 1995) indicated clearly the Government of National Unity's commitment to supporting open learning and new ways of interpreting and implementing distance education. One proposal in this regard was to investigate the establishment of a National Open Learning Agency (NOLA) 'as a small, flexible and responsive professional agency'. The decision was taken to establish NOLA within the Department of Education as a part of the National Institute for Lifelong Learning Development (NILLD). This institute fulfils the research and development of curriculum-related activities as they related to the promotion of lifelong, open learning development. The focus is thus, on research and development initiated by state department, stakeholders, role-players and other social development actors.

In the same spirit of showing commitment to distance education, a joint press statement was released in October 1996, by the vice-chancellors of Vista University, Technikon Southern Africa (TSA), and the University of South Africa (UNISA) to

19/4/2004). Technikons are often seen as a place attended by pupils without proper matric qualification. Worthy noting is that in government move to transform higher education, Technikons were renamed universities of technology. By changing Using the word 'university' the image of Technikons will change (Kassiem, 2003).

announce their intention to pursue the establishment of a confederal structure while continuing to respect the autonomy of individual institutions. To this end, they established the Confederation of Open Learning Institutions in South Africa (COLISA), which serves as a basis for collaborative ventures in a number of areas, including: finance and resource applications; academic development (Butcher, 1998); technology application; and the provision of joint core programmes and courses. This step was taken by the institutions on the basis that the quality and efficiency of distance education at these institutions, which had a collective enrolment of 25,000 students, will be enhanced by a confederal structure. Further collaboration with other institutions was envisaged consistent with the recommendations of the NCHE Report and international best practice.

Looking at the information highlighted above, it is clear that there is both significant policy commitment to the use of distance education methods in solving many of the country's education problems and there is also an urgent need to improve the quality of that provision (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996; Butcher, 1998). It is not the scope of this study to look at ways of providing quality distance education, but to highlight the need for distance education in South Africa, and particularly, television broadcast-based distance education.

Before embarking on the role of television broadcast-based distance education in South Africa, it is worth looking at the current distance education initiatives in South Africa. Distance education provisions will be discussed under the following categories: The University of South Africa; Vista University, Technikon South Africa; the Technical College of South Africa, Commercial Correspondence Colleges, Colleges of Education, Residential Universities and Technikons, Corporate Distance Education Providers, and Non-governmental Organisations.

2.5.2. Current distance education provisions in South Africa

It is imperative to note that by completion of this thesis, some of the distance institutions mentioned below ceased to exist as autonomous institutions as they were merged with other institutions in the governments' pursuit to restructure the higher education sector to solve problems of duplication, fragmentation and lack of access in parts of the country and to improve the quality of education on offer (SouthAfrica.info

reporter, 2003). The merger process was approved by the cabinet in November 2002 (BuaNews, 2003). Some mergers took effect from April 2003, 1 January 2004 and other mergers are approved for 1 January 2005 (BuaNews, 2003; SouthAfrica.info reporter, 2003). As the discussion unfolds, the researcher will clearly indicate which institutions have been merged or will be merged and the new names given or to be given to the new merged institutions. Although some mergers took effect from 1 January 2004, with the merged institutions operating under one council and administrative bodies, negotiations on streamlining the course offerings is still ongoing.

1. **The University of South Africa (UNISA)**¹⁰

The University of South Africa was established as a federation of colleges in 1916 (although its roots can be traced back to the founding of the University of the Cape of Good Hope in 1873). As each of these colleges became independent, UNISA gradually came to focus more and more on its provision for 'external studies', until, in 1946, it became a fully-fledged correspondence university (Botha, 1993: 23) which now falls under the jurisdiction of the House of Assembly. Its mission today is to offer 'university education by means of distance teaching to all meeting the entrance requirements (Maree, 1987: 9-10; South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996). Today, the University of South Africa (UNISA) is one of the ten mega-distance education universities in the world and has a student population of about 135 000 (University of South Africa¹¹; van Zyl, 1996:96). It has four regional centres in South Africa (Pretoria, Cape Town, Durban and Polokwane), which handle administration and provide library facilities, computer laboratories and lecture rooms for circuit lectures. Undergraduate and post graduate degree courses are offered via distance education in the faculties of Arts, Economics and Management Sciences, Education, Nursing, Engineering, Law, Theology and Science (Dodds *et al.*, 1999: 102; South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

¹⁰ From 1 January 2004, UNISA, Technikon South Africa (TSA) and the Vista University Distance Education Centre (VUDEC) were merged with the new institution being known as University of South Africa (UNISA) (<http://www.vista.ac.za/> date accessed 12/3/2004).

¹¹ <http://www.unisa.ac.za/> date accessed 22/8/2003.

The current mode of instruction in UNISA largely is by means of printed texts augmented by the use of audiocassettes, circuit lectures, and some radio broadcasts on a limited scale. Students can register on-line (SOL) and submit their assignments and contact their lecturers through the Internet. The university is currently putting its courses on the Internet. The university is affordable, since its courses are one-quarter to one-third the price of residential universities. It is accessible as students who do not have a university entrance matric can register for its access programme and it is flexible because students can plan their studies to fit into their lifestyles. It is credible because of the international recognition afforded to its qualifications (University of South Africa¹²). On the basis of equal opportunity and academic excellence it engages in teaching, research and community service, thus providing the Southern African society with suitably qualified people, knowledge and expertise to meet the needs and aspirations of all communities.

As stated earlier, through the process of restructuring higher education in South Africa, UNISA, Technikon South Africa and Vista University Distance Education Centre (VUDEC) merged from 1 January 2004, with the new institution being known as University of South Africa (BuaNews, 2003). The new institution impacts on social development through optimising its comprehensive character in relation to broad issues of human resource, knowledge and capacity building (University of South Africa¹³).

2. Vista University¹⁴

Vista University was enacted in 1981 under the Department of Education and Training as a result of the report of a commission of inquiry appointed 'to investigate the university needs and requirements of urban Africans in the Republic of South Africa' (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996). It began its first academic year in 1983 and describes itself as an open, autonomous university [which] was established with the purpose of providing university facilities for people living in the major urban areas of the Republic of South Africa. Like UNISA and Technikon SA, Vista was an autonomous institution under its own statute and governed by its

¹² University of South Africa (UNISA) <http://www.unisa.ac.za/> date accessed 22/8/2003

¹⁴ Vista University ceased to exist as from 1 January 2004 and its campuses were incorporated to other institutions of higher learning in South Africa, as it will be delineated in this section.

own council. Vista University had seven residential campuses (Bloemfontein campus¹⁵, East Rand and Soweto campuses¹⁶, Mamelodi campus¹⁷, Port Elizabeth campus¹⁸, Sebong campus¹⁹ and Welkom campus²⁰) and each campus had a faculty of Education, Arts, and Economic and Management Sciences. Through these campuses, the University offered a variety of degrees, diplomas and certificates. Between them, these campuses had 19 341 registered students in 1996.

In addition however, the University had the Vista University Distance Education Campus (VUDEC)²¹ based in Pretoria. Vista University's Distance Education Campus (VUDEC) allowed students to study full or part-time through correspondence (Vista University, online). VUDEC focused solely on the upgrading of underqualified teachers through distance education, offering eight education diplomas and certificates (van Zyl, 1996: 96). There were 12, 481 students registered at the Campus in 1996 (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996). Degree courses were offered in Education, Science and Humanities. Instruction is based on written study materials dispatched to students, which comprise study guides, prescribed books and references. These were supplemented by meetings or periodic sessions that took

¹⁵ University of South Africa (UNISA) <http://www.unisa.ac.za/> date accessed 22/8/2003

¹⁶ From 1 January 2005 East Rand and Soweto campuses will be incorporated into the University of Johannesburg, created through the merger of Rands Afrikaans University and Technikon Witwatersrand (BuaNews, 2003).

¹⁷ Mamelodi campus was incorporated into the University of Pretoria (<http://www.vista.ac.za/> date accessed 20/3/2003).

¹⁸ From 1 January 2005 Port Elizabeth campus will be incorporated into the merger between University of Port Elizabeth and Port Elizabeth Technikon becoming the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (BuaNews, 2003).

¹⁹ Sebong campus was incorporated into North West University, born out of the merger of Potchefstroom University and the University of the North West (<http://www.vista.ac.za/> date accessed 20/3/2003).

²⁰ Welkom campus was incorporated into the Free State Technikon (<http://www.vista.ac.za/> date accessed 20/3/2003).

²¹ VUDEC was incorporated into the long distance merger of University of South Africa and Technikon South Africa, with the new institution being known as University of South Africa (BuaNews, 2003; <http://www.vista.ac.za/> date accessed 20/3/2003).

place at the university's premises (Vista University²²). In 2003, Vista University had a student population of about 50 000 (Maree, 1987: 9-10; Vista University²³).

3. Technikon Southern Africa (TSA)²⁴

Technikon RSA was established as an autonomous tertiary education institution in 1980 under the House of Assembly, prior to which it had functioned as the external studies facility of the Technikon Witwatersrand. It came into existence as a result of the report of a committee appointed by the Minister of National Education to 'investigate the need for, and desirability of a Technikon for distance education' (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996). In 1993, the institution changed its name to Technikon SA (Southern Africa) 'to reflect [a] commitment to playing a key role in the educational upliftment of the entire subcontinent' (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996). . According to its mission, Technikon SA 'offered quality market-related distance education and services to its clients, and was the leader in its unique application of cost-effective distance teaching technology, cooperative tertiary career education, applied research and community service in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond' (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

Technikon South Africa (TSA) over the past 20 years had grown into one of the country's leading distance learning institutions with more than 60 000 students and more than 80 academic programmes. The institution also offered nationally recognised formal degrees, beginning with the Bachelor of technology degree and progressing to the doctorate level. Its nationally recognised courses fell under four divisions: Economics and Management, Sciences, Applied Community Sciences, Public Safety and Criminal Justice, Applied Natural Sciences and Engineering (van Zyl, 1996: 96). The modes of learning provided by Technikon SA catered for those who were unable to attend residential institutions. Distance education enabled them to

²² VUDEC was incorporated into the long distance merger of University of South Africa and Technikon South Africa, with the new institution being known as University of South Africa (BuaNews, 2003; <http://www.vista.ac.za/> date accessed 20/3/2003).

²³ Vista University (<http://www.vista.ac.za/> date accessed 20/3/2003).

²⁴ From 1 January 2004, Technikon South Africa (TSA), UNISA and the Vista University Distance Education Centre (VUDEC) were merged with the new institution being known as University of South Africa (UNISA) (<http://www.vista.ac.za/> date accessed 12/3/2004).

study at home or in their own time using study materials and attending tutorial sessions with their tutors and fellow students where possible. They made use of books and other resource materials at the Gold Fields Library and Information centre on the Florida Campus or at libraries and study centres spread throughout South Africa (Technikon South Africa²⁵).

4. Technical College of South Africa (TECHNISA)

The Technical College of South Africa (TECHNISA) is a technical college²⁶ for distance education, striving to provide for the changing distance education needs with respect to technical and vocational education (van Zyl, 1996: 96), in line with the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). It was founded in 1984 and presently falls under the Gauteng Department of Education. In keeping with the principle of lifelong learning, access to TECHNISA is open in that prior learning and experience is recognised (RPL)²⁷. The college liaises closely with Commerce and Industry and can therefore deliver candidates who are ready to enter the job market or be self-employed. Courses are offered in engineering, business, and social fields of learning. These courses range from Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) to N6²⁸, also including studies for the National Intermediate Certificate (Grade 11) and the National Senior Certificate (Grade 12). Technical College of South Africa has also introduced a community education programme in support of their formal vocational programme (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

In the 1995/96 academic year, there were 8, 650 students registered at TECHNISA (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996). Tuition at TECHNISA is

²⁵ Technikon South Africa (TSA) <http://www.tsa.ac.za/> date accessed 22/8/2003

²⁶ A Technical College like Technikon provide higher technical/vocational studies. Technical Colleges offer apprentice study for the National (Technical) Certificate (N training). The programme consists of three parts (N-1, N-2, N-3), each lasting for four months, six months or a year depending on the course concerned. The N-training is a pre-senior Certificate level and the N-3 credits are considered for the Senior Certificate (with pass in English and Afrikaans) for entry to Technikon and National Certificate Studies, but not for university studies (<http://216.239.59.104/search?q=cache:jQNcBZ4GP-4J:www.unesco.org/iau/cd-data/za> date accessed 20/3/2004).

²⁷ It refers to practices developed within education and training to identify and recognise adults' previous learning. The basic premise is that learning acquired informally, non-formally, experientially or formally can and should be recognised and accorded currency within formal education and training frameworks (<http://www.el.uct.ac.za/welcome.htm> date accessed 17/03/2004).

²⁸ N6 stands for national technical certificate, a post secondary qualification.

offered in a student-friendly manner and study material is available in Afrikaans and English. Courses are made up primarily of printed material, but in some subjects students are requested to record answers to specific questions on cassette and return the cassette to the lecturer for evaluation. Seminars, vacation schools, and practical sessions are run as part of certain courses. In a further attempt to support students, the college's first learning centre has been functioning since September 1996 at the main campus in Randburg. In addition to this, TECHNISA runs bridging programmes, designed to upgrade people wishing to study but lacking the necessary qualifications. The college also runs a range of non-formal courses (for example, evening computer literacy classes). Finally, TECHNISA has satellite centres located within specific industries, which are designed to service those industries through the provision of skills training.

5. Private Distance Education Colleges or Commercial Correspondence Colleges

The private distance education colleges are those colleges registered with the Correspondence College Council. The Correspondence College Council was set up under the Correspondence Act of 1965. That act governs private tuition, provides codes of conduct for private correspondence colleges, and regulates the Correspondence College Council. The Council is the registry body for all private correspondence colleges in South Africa and is responsible for ensuring that these colleges abide by the Correspondence College Act. The main aim of the council is to protect students by offering recourse for problems, which they might encounter at the colleges. It acts on written complaints, which are then taken up with the relevant college. The council also undertakes random inspections of colleges (usually inspecting six to eight colleges per year) to check whether the requirements of the Act are being adequately fulfilled and to investigate the quality of course materials and content. These inspections are usually conducted by local experts, but when necessary and feasible, international experts are used. The council also registers new colleges. Colleges are accepted or turned down on the basis of an evaluation of their prospective courses conducted by an impartial party hired by the council. The council has the power to set tribunals for existing colleges and, if necessary, to deregister them. It is a criminal offence to function as a private correspondence college without registering with the council (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

There are 64 colleges registered with the council, one (INTEC) of which has been in existence since 1906. Some of the colleges (for example, the Damelin Education Group, Omnitec Institute and the Institute of Personnel Management) are not solely involved in distance education, but offer face to face courses in addition to distance learning courses. A defining characteristic of all these colleges, however, is that they are financed privately. In general, the courses offered by these colleges are purely correspondence courses consisting of printed material only. Some of the course materials, however, also include materials of different media (for example, audiocassettes, videocassettes, CD-ROM, the Internet, Computer based teaching (CBT), and multimedia). In addition, some of the colleges (such as the Rapid Results College and INTEC College) are developing student support centres where students can gain access to college tutors and lecturers. This is increasingly supplemented by revision and other kinds of face to face classroom work in most of the colleges (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

There are three main types of courses available through the private distance education colleges: 1) The secondary school courses in are general aimed at adults who were unable to finish their secondary school careers through the formal education system. These courses are also available to people of school-going age unable or unwilling to attend a contact secondary school. Courses are available from standard four level through matric and lead to the acquisition of a senior certificate. 2) The vocational/professional courses are designed specifically to enhance the employability of students. A wide variety of technical and non-technical courses are available, on subjects ranging from motor mechanics and electronics to personnel management and banking. Many colleges have entered into a relationship with professional institutes in South Africa (for example, the Institute of Administration and Commerce of Southern Africa and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants), whereby the colleges offer courses in the various professional fields and the institutes function as the examining bodies for these courses. The Institute of Personnel Management is an exception to this norm, because it is a professional institute which, in addition to functioning as an examining body, also provides a distance education course that leads to examinations for its diploma in personnel management. 3) Non-vocational/hobby courses are offered by several colleges. These courses improve skills in particular subjects. Examples of these include courses on creative writing,

languages, dressmaking, interior design, and calligraphy (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996; ICDL distance learning courses database, institutions database, qualification providers²⁹).

The colleges vary greatly in scope and size. There are five main colleges; Damelin Correspondence College³⁰, INTEC College³¹, the Rapid Results College³², and Sukses Correspondence College (Lyceum and Sukses are both owned by Nasionale Kolleges³³). These colleges offer many courses in all of the above fields. Over the past few years, Allenby-In-home Study³⁴, a division of the Midrand Campus Group, has also become one of the larger and faster growing private educational institutions in South Africa. It offers a wide range of courses with inter-faculty credit transfers. The courses are conducted under the auspices of their Centre for Degree Studies and Centre for Diploma Studies (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

The smaller correspondence colleges tend to specialise in particular fields of interest. The College of Public Administration of Southern Africa, for example, offers courses only in the field of public administration, while the School of Modern Photography offers a single course in photography. Some of the smaller colleges do, however, offer courses in a range of fields; the Home Study Skills College of South Africa, for example, offers courses in subjects as diverse as horticulture, hotel and catering

²⁹ International Centre for Distance Education Learning (ICDL) distance learning courses database, institutions database, qualification providers available at http://www-icdl.open.ac.uk/instResult.ihtml?inst_id date accessed 20/3/2004.

³⁰ Damelin Correspondence College (<http://www.damelin.com/correspondence> date accessed 20/3/2004).

³¹ INTEC College (<http://www.intec.edu.za> date accessed 20/3/2004).

³² The Rapid Results College (<http://www.saide.org.za/worldbank/countries/zimbabwe/rapid.htm> date accessed 19/4/2004).

³³ Nasionale Kolleges (Naspers) Naspers is a multinational media group with its principal operations in pay-television and Internet subscriber platforms, print media, book publishing, private education and technology markets. The groups activities are conducted through subsidiaries, joint ventures and associated companies. Naspers's most significant operations are located in South Africa and in Greece, Cyprus, the Netherlands and Asia (Internetnews.com Staff, 1998; <http://www.naspers.com/English/home.as> date accessed 20/3/2004).

³⁴ Allenby-In-home Study (<http://www.in-home.edu.za> date accessed 20/3/2004).

studies, and management and administration (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

6. Colleges of Education

A number of very different types of providers exist in this sector. They range from very large state-funded colleges through to privately funded institutions (including both for-profit and non-profit colleges and non-governmental organisations), universities, colleges and technikons. There are: seven publicly-funded and dedicated distance colleges of education; three private, for-profit colleges, two of which are owned by the same shareholders; one private non-profit college; three publicly-funded universities (one is 'dual-mode' rather than a dedicated distance provider); one publicly-funded technikon; two 'dual-mode' colleges of education; and one small non-governmental organisation (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

Approximately 130, 000 students (nearly one third of South Africa's teachers) were enrolled in teacher education at a distance in 1995 (Gutlig and Butcher, 1996: 84; South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996; Butcher, 1998; Perraton, 2000: 74). Moreover, the sector was expanding rapidly, experiencing a 23 per cent increase in new enrolments between 1994 and 1995. Most of this expansion has been concentrated in two providers: the College of Education of South Africa (with a 149% increase in new enrolments) and the Success College (which registered 7403 students in its first year). During the same period, half the providers actually experienced a decline in the growth of new enrolments (two Pietermaritzburg-based colleges, Natal College of Education and Access College, registered over 100% increases in new enrolment, but from low bases). A number of institutions blamed the decline in their numbers on the expansion of low cost courses with high chances of success in some institutions (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

An interesting point to note is that the training of teachers by 'for-profit' colleges is a relatively new phenomenon in South Africa, but one that is growing rapidly. In 1995, Lyceum College had 16 263 students (making it the third largest provider). Success College enrolled 7 403 students in its first year of teacher education provision and the small Access College registered a 108 per cent increase in new enrolments between 1994 and 1995. Although there appears to be no charge to the state because the

colleges run on a cost-recovery basis, there are hidden costs such as provincial governments having to pay these teachers higher salaries, although there is not necessarily an improvement in the quality of their teaching. What this means is that the quality of education acquired in these colleges is questionable or of low quality. Further, the teachers produced are generally in areas of low national priority and university staff also use work time to do private work for colleges, for which they are paid (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

Registered students in colleges of teacher education at a distance overwhelmingly are studying in-service, and mainly studying to upgrade from M + 2³⁵ (Certificate level) to M + 3³⁶ (Diploma level). Thus, the majority of students are enrolled in programmes which would normally be considered to be 'initial' qualifications. That is, qualifications which teachers would normally be expected to have completed prior to becoming practising teachers (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996). The facts and figures indicate that there were: 12, 614 pre-service students (students who are not practising teachers); and 117, 000 in-service students (students who are practising teachers); 63, 015 teachers upgrading from 'below-the line' (that is, attempting to obtain an M +2 or M+3 qualification); while 32, 878 teachers were upgrading, 'above-the-line' (to M +4 and M +5 qualifications³⁷). This type of upgrading experienced a 71 per cent increase between 1994 and 1995 (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996)³⁸.

³⁵ M + 2 qualification means Matriculation/School leaving certificate plus two years of a post secondary Teacher's qualification (certificate). Teachers in this category considered as unqualified and are required to gain the qualifications up to the compulsory M + 3: Matriculation /School leaving certificate plus three years of a post secondary Teacher's qualification (Diploma) (Reddy, 2003)

³⁶ M + 3 Qualification means Matriculation /School leaving certificate plus three years of a post secondary Teacher's qualification (Diploma) (Reddy, 2003).

³⁷ M + 4 and M + 5 qualifications. M +4 means Matriculation/School leaving certificate plus four years of a post secondary Teacher's qualification and M +5 means Matriculation/School leaving certificate plus five years of a post secondary Teacher qualification.

³⁸ It was the intention of the researcher to provide new statistics on this section, but efforts to get these numbers from the institutions concerned were fruitless. Some of the colleges, for example, Natal College of Education had ceased to exist with its merger with Umlazi College of Further Education and Training, Springfield College of Education in 1 February 1999 to form The South African College for Open Learning (SACOL). Also in an effort to rationalise teacher education programmes, SACOL ceased to exist from 1 January 2001 and was incorporated to the University of South Africa (UNISA) (Reddy, 2003).

7. Residential Universities and Technikons

Several of the universities and technikons traditionally regarded as 'residential' offer, tuition through distance or mixed mode education (Butcher, 1998). As a result, there are many initiatives at various institutions, which are often very different in character. However, the rapid growth of distance education programmes in contact institutions raised a number of issues for the government. One worry is that the rapid growth of contact institutions distance education programmes will negatively affect the sustainability of the dedicated distance education institutions in South Africa. The Department of Education also wonders how these programmes address the need to improve the quality and learner support services as well as cost-efficiency and effectiveness of programmes. The Department of Education is concerned that quality is being compromised. The above concerns led to a moratorium in 2000 on the development of distance education courses or programmes within contact institutions (Vergnani, 2000). The moratorium was lifted in mid 2002, although it does provide approval restrictions in terms of the number of students to be enrolled (Fiona Bulman, telephone interview, 5 April 2004). According to Fiona Bulman, the ceiling limit of enrolment for contact institutions is not more than 3,0000 students (Fiona Bulman, telephone interview, 5 April 2004). Some of the contact institutions are as follows:

1) The Public Health Programme at the University of the Western Cape

The Public Health Programme strives to be a centre for excellence for Public Health Education, service development and research by providing leadership to address priority health needs, particularly for people living in disadvantaged communities. A distance learning programme on primary health care and public health issues was developed in order to reach a significantly larger pool of health professionals (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996). They offer a postgraduate certificate in public health; a postgraduate diploma in public health and a master of public health (Heywood, 2000³⁹).

³⁹ Postgraduate public health training University of Western Cape
(<http://www.afronets.org/archives/200009/msg00056.php> date accessed 7/3/2003).

2) The University of Natal⁴⁰

The University of Natal undertook to phase in a mixed mode approach from 1997 that would offer flexible entry and exit points for both undergraduate and post graduate students through the Open Learning Initiative. The Open Learning Initiative provides a framework through which the university seeks to meet the increasing demand both from school leavers and people already in the work place who cannot undertake full-time study for three consecutive years. In particular, the university seeks through the initiative, to contribute to the provision of human resources and address development strategies in KwaZulu Natal. Courses offered are not entirely material-based, but include short periods on campus, interaction with lecturers, as well as opportunities for structured tutorial interaction at learning centres. The programme is based on a credit point system and enables multiple entry and exit points in line with the National Qualification Frameworks (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996). The University of Natal offers open learning programmes in three areas: Community Development; Education and Nursing (Open Learning Networks⁴¹).

3) Medical University of South Africa (MEDUSA⁴²)

The Medical University of South Africa (MEDUSA) was founded in 1976 and its mission is to empower the educationally disadvantaged by providing excellent community oriented tertiary education, training and research in the health and related sciences and by promoting services at all levels of healthcare in the community (Medical University of South Africa⁴³). Medical University of South Africa offers two postgraduate courses through distance education. The first is a master's degree of Medicine in Family Medicine and the second is a postgraduate course in Veterinary Science. Both courses are designed for qualified doctors and lasts three years. The courses are made up of printed materials and MEDUSA also offers monthly face to

⁴⁰ From 1 January 2004, the University of Natal and the University of Durban Westville merged and the new institution is known as University of KwaZulu Natal. Therefore, currently, the Open Learning Initiative is operating under the University of KwaZulu Natal.

⁴¹ Open Learning Networks (<http://www.nu.ac.za/openlearning/policy.html> date accessed 1/1/2004).

⁴² From 1 January 2005 MEDUSA and the University of the North will merge and the new institution will be known as the University of Limpopo (BuaNews, 2003).

⁴³ Medical University of South Africa (<http://www.medunsa.ac.za> date accessed 5/11/2003).

face tutorials at the university (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996; Prakash, 2003).

4) Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PU FOR CHE)⁴⁴

Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education was founded in 1869 (Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education⁴⁵). The PU for CHE was involved in various distance education programmes at both the main campus at Potchefstroom and the Vaal campus in Vereeniging. At the main campus an undergraduate programme in business administration (BBA) was launched in 1996 in collaboration with the Africa Growth Network (AGN) and the Cal State University, Dominguez Hills USA. A postgraduate master's degree in business administration (MBA) was launched along similar lines during 1997. The university also offered an advanced diploma in professional nursing (ICDL and OP, 2003). Another form of distance education programme was the so-called two-year Bachelor of Education programme, which was better known as a 'vocational model'. The programme consisted of four three-day sessions presented at the University during vacations. These limited face to face contact sessions were supplemented by a detailed study guide, tuition materials and for some subjects, audiocassettes. At Vaal campus, students were registered in the Arts faculty, Commerce, Education and in Natural Science. In 1996 there were 1775 students registered for courses at the Vaal campus (South African Distance education Policy document, 1996). Overall, the university offered distance education programmes to nearly 10 000 students (Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education⁴⁶).

⁴⁴ From 1 January 2004 the University of Potchefstroom, University of North West and the Sebong Campus of Vista University merged and the new institution is known as North West University (BuaNews, 2003). The distance education courses which were by being offered by Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education are being offered under the new institution (University of North West).

⁴⁵ Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (<http://www.puk.ac.za/indexe.html> date accessed 05/11/2003).

⁴⁶ Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (<http://www.puk.ac.za/indexe.html> date accessed 05/11/2003).

5) Rand Afrikaans University (RAU)⁴⁷

Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) is primarily a residential university but has a distance education programme. It has a total student population of about 21, 000 (Rand Afrikaans University⁴⁸). Unlike UNISA and Vista University, it does not have regional centres in other parts of South Africa but offers distance education programmes based on guided self-study teaching models. Rand Afrikaans University offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Education, Liberal Arts, Natural Sciences, Engineering, Law and Economics. At RAU the mode of instruction is based on printed text, periodic study schools at the main campus and informal study groups (Owosu-Sekyere, 1996). The printed materials are usually augmented by periodic meetings such as seminars, weekend sessions and vacation residential schools.

6) University of Cape Town (UCT)

The University of Cape Town's (UCT) School of Education has made some tentative moves towards offering courses at distance. In 1996, discussions were underway to mount a further diploma in education or Postgraduate diploma for teacher educators through distance education (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

7) University of the Orange Free State

The University of the Orange Free State is involved in various distance education programmes, most of which are connected to Kimberley and Welkom. These programmes are referred to by the University as 'semi-distance' teaching programmes or 'special residential education'. Within this model, students spend considerably less time attending lectures and are given self-study learning modules to compensate for this decreased contact time. There were 122 students enrolled at the Kimberly campus in 1996. The following programmes are offered in this way: Bachelor of Education, Higher Education Diploma, Bachelor of Arts and several occasional courses run by individual departments. The University of the Free State is also a member of the Open

⁴⁷ From 1 January 2005, Rand Afrikaans University and Technikon Witwatersrand (including the Soweto and East Rand campuses of Vista University) will merge and become the University of Johannesburg (BuaNews, 2003).

⁴⁸ Rand Afrikaans University (<http://www.rau.ac.za/index.asp> date accessed 19/4/2004).

Learning Distance Education Access Programme (OLDEAP) which commenced in totality in 1997 (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

The purpose of this consortium⁴⁹ is to provide students with support, and quality learning and to promote educational and training links in South Africa (The Free State Open Learning Distance Education Access Programme, 1994). This programme was developed to provide students with an opportunity to pursue post-secondary studies without attending full-time classes at a residential institution. Initial subjects for the programme were Mathematics, English, and a Foundation Course on Life-Long Learning (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

8) University of Pretoria

The University of Pretoria is involved in distance education provision through three initiatives: 1) satellite campuses, the idea behind the satellite campuses is to bring educational opportunities within reach of communities and to provide a combination of distance education and face to face tuition. Thus, students attend a reduced number of lectures or arrange their studies through a block system of contact and non-contact teaching and learning opportunities. There are currently two campuses in operation, Hammanskraal Campus and Witbank Campus; 2) Teleteaching Project, the original aim of the university's interactive teleteaching project was to find a cost-effective way of getting educationally involved in its surrounding communities. Microwave technology is currently employed to transmit a television signal to viewers. Telephone lines are used to relay voice from viewers back to the presenter in the studio. In the schools project, 22 schools are linked to the system. In addition to daily broadcasts to these schools from 14:00-16:00, Mondays to Thursdays, various Summer, Winter, and Spring schools are presented to especially help prepare matriculants for their final exams. Teachers benefit too through viewing and separate discussions of recorded lesson contents with them (Stoop, 1995; van Zyl, 1996: 96; Sedibe, 1998: 96-98).

Programme contents mainly focus on Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Accountancy, Biology, and a number of life-skills courses. After-hours transmission of lectures to

⁴⁹ The Orange Free State Open Learning Distance education Access Programme (OLDEA) before the merging of some of the higher education institutions comprised the following institutions: Technikon Free State; Technikon South Africa; University of South Africa; South African Institute For Distance Education; and Vista University.

students at the university's Witbank campus is now a common practice. The university acquired its own satellite channel to expand its broadcasts to students' nation-wide, as from 1997. Video conferencing facilities for world-wide interactive communication with students was to be operational in 1996; 3) National Colleges Project, the University of Pretoria and National Colleges embarked on a joint agreement in 1993 with a view to offering prospective and other students a wide range of University-accredited courses, through National Colleges' constituent colleges, namely Lyceum, Success, and Mentor Business and Computer School. Certificates and diplomas studies range from career studies to academic diplomas consisting of University-accredited subjects. A variety of Management Diplomas consisting of both career and University-accredited subjects are also offered (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

9) University of the Witwatersrand

The University of the Witwatersrand is involved in initiatives which include forms of distance education: 1) in 1994, the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Public Development Management, and the Management for Schools Training Programme (MSTP) entered into a partnership to run a Further Diploma in Education Development Management and Administration. This part-time, two-year programme is designed to meet the challenges facing practising educational leaders in the schools. In 1996, approximately 170 students were registered in their first year, and 130 in their second year. Students work on distance education course materials at their schools, and attend short residential sessions at Wits during the school vacations. 2) In 1996, the Faculty of Education embarked on another programme of Further Diplomas in Education in Mathematics, Science, and English language teaching designed to address the needs of practising teachers of these subjects. The programme aims to improve the learning and teaching in schools by extending teacher's educational, subject, and subject teaching knowledge and skills. As above, students work on distance education course materials at their schools, and attend short residential sessions at Wits during the school vacation. 3) Since 1993, the faculty's department of Adult Education has offered its Higher Diploma for Educators of Adults on a semi-distance basis, involving part-time study and block-release, the provision of learning materials, off campus study groups and field supervision. The department now offers its master's degree in Adult Education through a similar format. 4) The Centre for

Continuing Education is involved in the development of distance education approaches in several of its research, development and delivery projects, such as Rural Education Facilitators Project, the Kathorus Community Support Educators Project, the Teachers English Language Improvement Programme, and in the flexible delivery of its Adult Educator Programme. The Centre has also carried out major action research work in the use of Radio Forums in nonformal community based education. 5) Wits Television produces educational programmes for university departments, private organisations, and the broadcast media. These television productions have been used in a variety of settings and ways, some of which embrace distance education procedure. 6) The Centre for Research and Development in Mathematics, Science, and Technology Education (RADMASTE) is a research and development initiative in mathematics, science and technology education located in the University's Science Faculty. It aims to assist the development of teachers and teacher educators. One of its projects is the MAESTRO Programme. This aims to provide self-study learning materials in Physical Science from standards six to ten to act as resources for teachers. The materials are contained in approximately seventy-five units consisting of slides, audiocassettes, and workbooks (on topics such as Electricity, Thermal Physics, Chemical reactions and Organic Chemistry) (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

8. Corporate Distance Education Providers

Various companies and corporations are considering the use of distance education techniques as a means of providing in-service training to employees. The following are examples of corporate distance education provision already taking place:

1) ABSA Bank Training Centre

ABSA started AGN (African Growth Network) using satellite and television technology. AGN is now a subsidiary of ABSA. This network is not only available to ABSA, but to any company or individual. Although ABSA makes use of the network for ABSA specific programmes and enrolls students on generic programmes, AGN's other clients have the same options (Jany Dealnaiba, telephone interview, 5 April 2004). A company can either enroll staff for the generic programmes or can have specific programmes broadcast (in-house). AGN currently broadcasts on two channels. ABSA had 9, 400 students enrolled in 1996. There are 4 training

departments and eight training centres, 1, 500 study centres (including viewing points), and eight examination centres (Stoop, 1995; South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996; van Zyl, 1996).

2) AGN PowerMatric

AGN, sponsored by SANLAM⁵⁰ runs a PowerMatric course through which students can obtain a matriculation certificate by watching teachers on television, working in workbooks, and listening to tapes. Over two years, students can obtain a matric certificate through Independent Examination Board (IEB). Television programmes are offered outside normal working hours (so that employed students may enroll at PowerMatric) and AGN has learning points all over South Africa (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

3) First National Bank Staff College

The main aim of this college is to provide training in banking to First National Bank personnel. There are two centres, one at Braamfontein, Johannesburg, (which primarily provides non-managerial training) and another in Sandown (which provides managerial training). These centres offer contact training to staff members. In addition, the college offers some training through distance education or 'distributed training'. This entails the provision of self-study modules to staff members. The college has developed approximately 100 different modules, which are used in the in-service training of staff members. Most of the self-study modules cover non-managerial topics, although some deal with managerial subjects. The modules are made up of printed study books and videos, and most have testing and evaluation built into them. A certificate of competence is issued to staff members when they have successfully completed a module (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996). It's vital to mention that by the completion of this thesis, the First National Bank Staff College was still operational, as per conversations held with some of the staff members.

⁵⁰ SANLAM is a group of financial experts. It is a major provider of life insurance, retirement annuities, savings products, unit trust and trust services. It also provides intelligent investment and risk products to South African group funds and schemes. Sanlam was started in 1918, and the goal was the economic empowerment of the Afrikaners. Since then that vision has expanded to encompass all (inclusive empowerment of all groupings in South Africa) (<http://www.sanlam.co.za/about-us/companyinformation/whoware/who+are+we.htm> date accessed 20/3/2004).

9. Non-Governmental Organisations

1) South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED Trust)

The South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED Trust) was started in 1959. The organisation is engaged in a wide range of educational activities. It has been involved in distance education through two main programmes: 1) Turret Correspondence College, this college was established in 1970 and offers a secondary level correspondence course and support for registered learners; 2) Distance University Student Support Project (DUSSPRO), this programme was set up in 1959 to offer support to students enrolled with London University. In 1971, the programme began supporting UNISA students. By 1992, 2, 057 students received support from DUSSPRO in centres in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth, Grahamstown and Pretoria. UNISA has now taken over the activities of DUSSPRO (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996; van Zyl, 1996: 96-97).

In 1996 the SACHED Trust was in the process of developing two initiatives on the basis of its experiences with Turret Correspondence College and DUSSPRO. These are: 1) an Alternative Secondary Curriculum for Adults (ASECA), the ASECA programme involves the creation of a new curriculum and the development of a secondary level distance education programme for adults (Botha, 1993: 23; SACHED⁵¹). The programme offers distance education courses from standards five to ten in four subjects which include: Communication in English, Mathematics, Integrated Science and Integrated Social Studies. The SACHED Trust is engaged in the development of materials for the courses, including printed materials, diagnostic test, and audio cassettes; and 2) Training Distance Educators and Administrators Programme, this programme was set up to provide training for educators and administrators for the ASECA programme (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996; SACHED⁵²).

⁵¹ SACHED (http://www-icdl.open.ac.uk/intstResults.ihtml?inst_id=5901&p=1 date accessed 3/4/2004).

⁵² SACHED (http://www-icdl.open.ac.uk/intstResults.ihtml?inst_id=5901&p=1 date accessed 3/4/2004).

2) Theological Education by Extension College (TEEC)

The Theological Education by Extension College (TEEC) was founded in 1976 (TEEC⁵³). Theological education by extension is not merely education by correspondence. The extension method places a great emphasis on tutorials. Thus courses consist of course handbooks and prescribed books, which form part of a self-directed study programmes. Regular tutorials are organised in various regions around the country by the TEEC and run by volunteer tutors. The college offers a range of theological courses, ranging from short quarter-year award courses to a full diploma course which takes an average of four to six years to complete and is accredited by the Joint Board for the Diploma in Theology (South Africa). The TEEC also offers a range of short courses, which are designed for use by parish groups and do not require formal registration or lead to any accreditation (TEEC⁵⁴). There were 1, 255 students registered at the college in 1996. The TEEC is funded entirely by the fees of its students (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996).

3) Gauteng Youth College

The Gauteng Youth College is a new education centre initiated in 1994 by the Gauteng Education Department for young people who want to complete Grade 12. It has four satellite schools in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Alberton, and Vanderbijlpark. Any student, of any age, in Gauteng who attempted Grade 12 between 1991 and 1994, and failed, is eligible to register with the college. There were approximately 1,700 students in 1996 (Wilson, 1995; South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996). It is worth noting that the researchers efforts to get up to date information on Gauteng Youth College were fruitless.

2.5.3. A general assessment of distance education in South Africa

The most recent research work done into distance education in South Africa shows clearly that the quality of distance education practices in South Africa leaves much to be desired. A general assessment of distance education practices reveals that taken as a whole, distance education's contribution to the priorities for education and training in the *policy framework* is variously marginal, inefficient and, in respect of the values

⁵³ TEEC (http://www-icdl.open.ac.uk/intstResults.ihtml?inst_id=5908&p=1 date accessed 3/4/2004).

⁵⁴ TEEC (http://www-icdl.open.ac.uk/intstResults.ihtml?inst_id=5908&p=1 date accessed 3/4/2004).

sought for democratic South Africa, dysfunctional (SAIDE, 1994). This general conclusion was also supported by more recent research into the quality of teacher education offered at a distance in South Africa, while the Green Paper on Higher Education has also reflected such concerns. There are serious concerns about the efficacy, appropriateness and effectiveness of current distance education provision (Department of Education, 1996).

Despite the above mentioned weakness, there is no doubt that these initiatives are contributing as far as provision and access is concerned. Many who would otherwise see education as a far-fetched dream, due to physical disabilities, job, family and financial commitments preventing enrolment at a conventional degree awarding institution, are accommodated in distance education institutions.

It should be noted that distance education is an important means of expanding educational opportunities and provision at many levels, and of increasing access to education, especially for traditionally deprived groups in society-rural dwellers, the economically less well-off, women and disabled people (Rumble, 1992). Evidence from many developing countries suggests that distance education can play a significant and useful role in teacher education and often has advantages in terms of cost and its capacity to reach students (Jenkins, 1989). However, in many countries distance education remains something at the margin, outside the central and regular activities of teacher education and support, used to resolve occasional crises but not something to be taken as seriously as conventional educational (Perraton and Potashnik, 1997). With the exceptions of Tanzania and the University of South Africa, distance education within Africa has remained a minor activity of the dual-mode universities, which have either run specialised programmes, most often in education, or sought to offer a range of courses parallel to their regular ones. Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria have all set up university programmes of distance education for teachers. Distance education units have been set up in Namibia, Swaziland and Uganda among others. In these dual mode universities, the numbers involved are relatively small and most universities are offering only a narrow range of courses.

The University of Swaziland, for example, had only 282 students studying at a distance in 1998-9 while an external programme at Makerere University was launched with 246 students (Aguti, 1999a: 7). The University of Lagos and the University of

Zambia have longer experience than most of running distance education. Their story yields some general conclusions (Perraton, 2000:108). The potential definitely is there, but often the resources and the political commitment (as compared to the rhetoric) are not. Moreover, distance education, without the resources or the commitment to make it work, often succeeds only in offering hope to large numbers of enrollees, and frustration to most of them because of its lack of quality and its effectiveness in helping them realise their goals.

Too often, distance education has been introduced rather hastily or arbitrarily in a top-down manner. Policy makers tend to assume that the mere introduction of distance education will bring about the desired changes in organisational work ethics, environment and productivity. Distance education and associated technologies should be perceived as a set of useful tools for solving specific problems, and not a universal remedy for all educational ills that plague the developing world. In Africa, operational effectiveness of distance education has been below expectation because of the following reasons. At the policy level, the introduction of distance education strategies has not been properly co-ordinated with other efforts such as provision of adequate resources, the development of adequate supporting infrastructures, education and training users of distance education (Williams, 2000). At the organisational level, distance education and associated technologies have been introduced without adequate understanding of the organisational culture and context, including political, physical, economic, social, technological and trade environment (PPESTT) (Jenkins, 1989; Hawkrigde and Chia-Erh, 1991; Marcelle, 1998 quoted in *Challenges in implementing distance education in Africa*⁵⁵; *Challenges in implementing distance education*⁵⁶). Interaction between the two levels is equally important in order to understand policy formulation and the effectiveness of the process involved in a well-functioning distance education system. Policy needs to show greater sensitivity to the contextual issues at the organisational level.

⁵⁵ Challenges in implementing Distance education in Africa.
http://www.firstmonday.dk/issues/issue5_5/darkwa/3d6 date accessed 4/6/2003.

⁵⁶ Challenges in implementing Distance education in Africa.
http://www.firstmonday.dk/issues/issue5_5/darkwa/3d6 date accessed 4/6/2003.

Another challenge to overcome is cultural bias. Current research into distance education has focused on the process as a Western social/cultural/educational construct, and is being viewed by some as a way to export this world view to other nations more efficiently and quickly (Bork 1993; Barker and Dickson, 1996). Distance learning, by its very nature, involves more than just the transmission of information, but also the transmission of cultural/social paradigms between and among the participants. Any design of a distance learning curriculum needs to be sensitive to cross-national cultural experiences (Spirou, 1995; Cumings and Sayers, 1996). To date, most of the distance learning models have been developed and tested outside of Africa, in American, Canadian, or European educational environments. Without diligent research focusing on localising content, this will pose a problem (Sayers, 1991; Cummings and Sayers, 1990; Owston, 1997). To date, few scholars or technocrats supporting information technology have examined the possible effects of technology on the traditions of local cultures (Asante, 1992; Ani, 1994). Clearly, there is the need to address these issues so that distance education in Africa would not be seen as an attempt by foreign institutions to extend their influence on the continent. Some may view it simply as cultural imperialism (*Challenges in Implementing Distance Education in Africa*⁵⁷).

It is imperative to have appropriate national distance education policies if optimum operational effectiveness is to be achieved. According to Peter Kinyanjui (1998), the purpose of having an appropriate national distance education policy is to create an enabling environment in which: economic and social benefits may be achieved; utilisation of resources may be optimised; domestic technological capabilities may be encouraged and procurement decisions can be taken rationally. The distance education policy itself should aim to: promote, encourage and support the orderly development of distance education and associated technologies in the country; enhance the effectiveness of distance education at minimal economic and social costs; outline means of improving education and training facilities to overcome the scarcity of skilled personnel (Williams, 2000); outline the application priorities in consonance

⁵⁷ Challenges in implementing Distance education in Africa.
http://www.firstmonday.dk/issues/issue5_5/darkwa/3d6 date accessed 4/6/2003.

with national development plans and ensure the development of an infrastructure for efficient communication, the establishment of mechanisms for the co-ordination and effective management of information and communications technologies in the country (Kinyanjui, 1998). Firm political backing is also required (Heese, 1996: 89).

In conclusion, it appears that more and more serious use must be made of alternative innovative, non-formal and cost-effective approaches where radio, television and other media are optimally utilised in the bid to increase access to basic education and general education. For in Africa basic and general education, is all that the majority can aspire towards for some time to come (Kala, 1995).

2.6. Current educational practices and their impacts on education⁵⁸

2.6.1. Instructivism

A fundamental criticism came from Paulo Freire's⁵⁹ work entitled *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). He claimed that much education is a process of 'banking', or transferring banks of information from the near omniscient teacher to the empty minds of his students (Freire, 1970; Young *et al.*, 1980). Underlying Freire's work is a belief that education is a process of increasing one's understanding and ability to control the world, rather than a process of mastering a fixed body of subject-matter. While his theories, and his practice, were worked out in teaching adults to read, the ideas behind them were relevant to a broader critique. In contrast with Freire's views, the orthodoxy has been that there is an organised body of knowledge teachers already possess and which students need to master. The hidden assumption is that the set of

⁵⁸ Some of the information presented in this section of the study was presented in the researchers masters degree thesis entitled Identification of Misconceptions Held by Teachers and Students with Respect to Concepts of Mendelian Genetics and Assessment of Teaching Methods to Overcome Such Misconceptions (Ivala, 1999).

⁵⁹ Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator and is one of the most influential educational thinkers of the late 20th century. He was born in Recife, Brazil on September 19, 1921, and died of heart failure in Sao Paulo, Brazil on May 2, 1997. Freire's most well known work is *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). Throughout this and subsequent books, he argues for a system of education that emphasises learning as an act of culture and freedom. He is well known for concepts such as 'banking' education, in which passive learners have pre-selected knowledge deposited in their minds. Other important concepts developed by Freire include: 'Dialectic', 'Empowerment', 'Mystification', 'Generative Themes/Words', 'Humanisation', 'Liberatory Education', Praxis, 'Problematisation', and 'Transformation of the World'.
(http://www.education.miami.edu/ep/contemporary/Paulo_Freire/paulo_freire.html date accessed 20/3/2004).

knowledge an individual needs will correspond with the set defined by the teacher, or the syllabus, although either is a necessary arbitrary part of the universe of knowledge.

A consequence of this view is that the teacher deserves profound respect and that the printed word, being the source of the teacher's authority, the very repository of the subject-matter of education, deserves the greatest respect of all. This view of the teacher is symbolised by the Italian habit of referring to professors as 'the barons'. According to William and Doll (1993: 8) much of our curriculum to date has trained us to be passive receivers of pre-ordained 'truths', not active creators of knowledge.

A distinguished British educator, Edith Moorhouse writes of elementary school teaching as it was forty years ago:

The emphasis in teacher training was on the techniques of holding the attention of a class of children, the question at the appropriate moment when attention began to lapse, the raising of an eyebrow, the quick drawing on the blackboard... The teacher stood in front of the class of children of one age group who sat in straight rows facing the blackboard and talked to and questioned the children for much of the day (Moorhouse, 1970).

Teacher centred education has not been confined to the elementary school. "Universities have existed for over a thousand years", writes Brown, but;

From the very beginning of organised higher education, teachers and professors have presented a united front against the notion that students will learn just as much, and possibly a great deal more, if permitted to learn on their initiative rather than as a captive audience in the classroom. At no point in the history of education have schools and universities allowed students the autonomy, which is necessary in the learning process (1968).

Historically, classroom teaching has been highly ritualised and any major change is perceived as an invasion of sacred territory. Russel Hoban points out that "ritualisation in teaching is flexible enough to permit idiosyncrasies of personal style, arrangement of the daily schedule, police methods, pacing, et cetera, but major characteristics of ritual tend to be invariant" (Hoban, 1968). Two invariants to which Hoban refers are teacher control of the teaching-testing-grading and punishment process and failure to face interaction with students. Any substantial reduction of the teachers' dominant status or major change in the interpersonal teacher-learner communication is likely to elicit some teacher hostility and resistance. Teaching by

rote is endemic because the teachers can manage nothing else. To depart from it is too dangerous. According to Clarence Beeby (1966: 5):

The teacher in a village school who has himself struggled only to a doubtful Grade VI or Grade VII level is always teaching to the limits of his knowledge. He clings desperately to the official syllabus, and the tighter it is the safer he feels. Beyond the pasteboard covers of the one official textbook lies the dark void where unknown questions lurk. The teacher is afraid of any other questions in the classroom but those he himself asks, for they are the only ones to which he can be sure of knowing the answers.

This method was functional enough in the colonial period, as it produced more than enough clerks to fill the lower echelons of government. For students with this destiny the content was also functional. If they were to be clerks in government service, working in countries where government dominated the modern sector of the economy, then the skills required were those of mastering and operating a fixed set of rules and procedures. The clerk's function was merely to carry out the clerical duties appropriate to his grade, neither questioning them nor understanding them. An education of this sort is not likely to produce people who can use their learning to change society, or their own position in it. Neither does it allow learners to take advantage of technical advances in agriculture or health or industry.

Many teachers in both conventional and distance education systems continue to use the traditional or teacher-centred (instructivism) method of teaching (Macdonald-Ross, 1979; Sewart *et al.*, 1984). This method of teaching is based on application of behavioural and neo-behavioural principles, where meaningful learning is seen as a progression through a series of stages along a continuum from expert (teacher) to novice (learner) (Ausubel, 1968; Carey, 1993). It incorporates carefully designed instruction with systematic relationships among pre-specified behavioural objectives, instructional strategies and evaluation. Therefore, the teacher is seen as the subject matter expert and is responsible for organising and transmitting the information (typically via lecture or lesson) and the passive learner as the empty vessel into which knowledge can be poured. In this tradition, knowledge is conceived as representing a real world that exists separately and independently of the learner. Knowledge is considered 'true' only if it correctly reflects the independent world (Jonassen, 1991).

The didactic system of education emphasises the notion that students passively accept, without questioning, what they are taught. They learn by memorising and repetition. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that pupils learn and thus their personalities determine how much motivation they provide to their pupils (Dore, 1976; Central Advisory Council of Education, 1980: 15-18). The syllabus is rigid and non-negotiable (rigid structures that in most cases do not deal with related fields of study). Subject matter is restrained by textbook content (with teachers providing the main source of information within a specified period of time). Examinations are the main methods of evaluating students. Inputs from parents or the public, on what and how students are taught, are unwelcome. Such a system provides learners with isolated pieces of inert knowledge (Hannafin, 1992). Teachers have little or no say in curriculum development or content. Such systems are developed and controlled from a distance, oblivious of the fact that teachers remain significant curriculum gatekeepers, not only in exercising a pocket veto over external curriculum initiatives, but also in actively fashioning curriculum experiences within their own classroom (Kirst and Walker, 1971; Thorntorn, 1992).

2.6.2. Advantages and disadvantages of an instructivist system of education

Instructivism is praised for its emphasis on formative and summative evaluation (Dick and Carey, 1990) which is seen as one of its greatest advantages. Its ability to prescribe steps, order and conditions of learning, is also seen as strength (Divesta and Rieber, 1987). It is also a cheap form of instruction, as teachers do not depend upon individual student access to 'high-tech' equipment and requires few resources. Lessons are easy to prepare and require only minimal ancillary support (for example, chalkboard and chalk, overhead projector facilities, slide projector and possibly cassette players). However there are a number of weaknesses with this model. Examples of these are that instructivism focuses primarily on the development of intellectual skills and fails to address the components of affective domains (Reigeluth, 1989).

According to educational psychologists, instructivism undermines the development of autonomous self-evaluation to the extent that such practices are experienced by the learners as efforts to control their behaviour (Deci *et al.*, 1991). There are also problems associated with the normal distribution of human ability, for example, while

lecturers may aim their exposition at the 'average' students in the group, they run a risk of boring the high-flyers and of overwhelming the less able. It is therefore difficult to teach students, with varying degrees of prerequisite knowledge, reasonably complex subject matter with a high degree of efficiency and effectiveness. Note taking in lectures is equally problematic. Some students are able to write quickly and capture all the points, while others who write more slowly miss considerable amount of materials. This method of instruction also has the limitation of working on narrowly defined goals that do not prepare students for creative investigation of knowledge, promotes meaningless application of decontextualised procedural and conceptual knowledge and relies on memorisation at the expense of understanding (Morgan, 1991; Hannafin, 1992). Instructivism also uses grading to provide motivation and punishment for poor grades. Ronald Dore (1976) asserted that examinations test only that which is readily examinable. If there are qualities that are valuable, but that cannot easily be measured, then they are likely to get little attention in a system based firmly on qualifications. Many critics and researchers lament the fact that students who can answer complex questions and solve problems are unable to explain the underlying reasons or methods they used to reach their conclusions (Swamy, 1987; Staver, 1989). Grant Wiggins (1993) argued that test scores are not synonymous with educational achievement and do not measure process-oriented problem-solving, currently emphasised in science education. Instructivism is also criticised for not engaging students in the learning process and fails to develop creative or problem solving skills.

The objective of education, according to Carl Roger (1969), is not to create pedagogical cripples, who cannot feed for themselves in the learning experience and who require the services of an autocratic teacher. Rather it is to aid in the development of self-reliant learners which instructivism has failed to produce. Charles Reigeluth (1987) stated that, as progress towards highly technological and rapidly changing information oriented society occurs, the present structure of our educational system, which is instructivist, will become more and more inadequate. In the past thirty years and especially during the past decade, there has occurred in education what UNESCO's Henri Dieuzeide has called a "Copernican Revolution", a transfer for that centre of gravity of educational thinking and research from the functions and activities of teachers, the "teacher centred mentality", to the behaviours of learners,

the “pupils- centred approach” (Dieuzeide, 1970). The change has been described by a prominent Australian broadcaster as the “decentralisation of learning” (Cass, 1975).

According to observers of the British primary school, the change to a learner-centred educational universe has been due to a growing acceptance by learners and teachers of three basic principles long discussed by educators but not widely acted upon. The first of these is the recognition that each individual learns each content area or skills in different ways, and probably at different times from other learners. If learning has any one characteristic, it is idiosyncrasy, and the concept of a ‘class’ of learners is therefore a foolish paradox. The second principle is that effective learning is experiential; whether interpreted in a phenomenological or behaviourist’s framework, the principle is that one can best learn by experiencing. The third principle is that learning in the new world of rapid change must be lifelong, so that in youth one need not learn enough for a lifetime, but must acquire the skills to be a responsible continuing learner in adulthood. To educate a child raised in a world of instant information where interactive technologies make it possible to act on the world with a press of a button, a guiding philosophy that suggests principled changes in the curriculum and effective use of technology as part of these changes is needed. This philosophy is expounded in constructivism, a theory of cognitive growth and learning that has gained many adherents in the recent years (Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978; Foreman and Puffall, 1988; Newman, Griffin and Cole, 1989; Resnick, 1989).

2.6.3. Constructivism

The roots of constructivism can be found in the assertion that individuals do not store verbatim representations of reality, but during recall, actually construct knowledge (Bartlett, 1932). Jean Piaget (1973) defined this as the notion of equilibration while Lev Vygotsky (1978) introduced the idea of social construction of knowledge. John Dewey (1938) asserts that a truly democratic classroom provides an optimal environment for students to discover, explore, ask questions, investigate, experiment, and in short, construct knowledge.

Constructivists in education are closely aligned with the theories of Jean Piaget (Von Glaserfeld, 1984; Kamii, 1985; Duckworth, 1987; Fosnot, 1989; Confrey, 1990), where knowledge is presented as explicitly being constructed, both personally and in

interaction with others as well as the physical world (Jonassen, 1991; Strommen and Bruce, 1992). They hold that learning is an active process (Pressley, Harris and Marks, 1992 quoted in Harris and Graham, 1994; Perkins, 1999), during which we construct reality from our own experiences. Whatever we learn cannot be independent of the context in which it was learned and what we already know (Dewey, 1938; Piaget, 1963; Piaget, 1969; Duffy *et al.* 1991; Spiro *et al.* 1991; Brooks and Brooks, 1993; Palincsar and Klenk, 1993 quoted in Harris and Graham, 1994; Reid, 1993 quoted in Harris and Graham 1994; William and Doll; 1993; Brenner, 1995; Jaramillo, 1996; Geelan, 1997; Windschitl, 1999). There is no *tabularasa* on which new knowledge is etched. Rather, learners come to learning situations with knowledge gained from previous experiences and such prior knowledge influences what new or modified knowledge they will construct during new learning experiences. A learner is perceived as someone who is not only an active discoverer, but also an inventor and problem-solver (Lawton and Hooper, 1978). Piaget (1964), Novak and Gowin (1984), van Niekerk (1995: 4-5), Osborne and Wittrock (1985), Geelan (1997), and Perkins (1999) viewed the goal of education as empowering the learner with the ability to discover new knowledge and ideas, and to foster creativity and inventiveness. This is because it is in the learners' mind where new meanings are to be formulated and understood. This can only be achieved if the learner is an active participant in the learning process.

According to Duckworth (1987), Hannafin (1992), and Muncey and McQuillan (1996) reflective teaching that emphasis's engaging learners with phenomena, and then working to understand the sense they are making of these phenomena, is needed. Teachers should act as facilitators, mentors and guides while the students actively engage in their learning (Erickson, 1986; Duckworth, 1986; Tharpe and Gallimore, 1989 quoted in Harris and Graham, 1994; Copley, 1992: 681; Omrod, 1995: 59). Within the dynamics of the model, it is important not to seek to control all the many activities that take place under the rubric of teaching, but to be able to ascertain their nature and potential effectiveness at will, and to direct them differentially to learners as needed, with full awareness of the extent to which external agencies (such as parents and the community) are also influencing teaching and learning process. A broader range of approaches to assessment may be necessary in order to provide a useful picture for teachers, of pupils progress in understanding (Wiggins, 1993).

Constructivists call for elimination of grades and standardised testing. They see assessment as part of the learning process in the service of the learner and feel that it should involve multiple perspectives in the evaluation (Wiggins, 1993). Students should be given more responsibility for self-assessment (Boyd and Cowan, 1985; Edwards, 1989). Constructivists also advocate the elimination of a standardised curriculum and emphasise more use of curricula customised to the prior context of students. That is emphasis on integrating the different types of knowledge relevant to the pupils, and use of raw data and primary sources. Syllabi are seen as a guide, with teachers having to adopt innovative and creative ways of helping pupils to learn, focusing on working on real problems. This philosophy holds that play and experimentation are valuable forms of learning (Herron and Sutton-Smith, 1971; Garvey, 1977; Daiute, 1989). Play involves the consideration of novel combinations of ideas, and the hypothetical outcomes of imagined situations and events. It is a form of mental exploration in which children create, reflect on and work out their understanding. Collaborative learning is also emphasised (Johnson, Maruyama, Nelson and Skon, 1981; Bruner, 1986; Cunningham, 1991; Rysavy and Sales, 1991; Bundage, Keane and Mackneson, 1993; Perkins, 1999; Windschitl, 1999). The advantage of these collective efforts is that children are able to reflect on and elaborate not just their own ideas, but those of their peers. They view their peers as resources, not competitors. Mutual tutoring, a sense of shared progress and feeling of team work are the natural outcomes of co-operative problem solving (Kagan, 1990; Johnson and Johnson, 1994, 1996; Ancis, 1998), and this process has been shown to produce substantial advances in learning.

Constructivists suggest several directions for instructional designers: increased emphasis on the affective domain of learning; to make instruction personally relevant to the learner; to help learners develop skills, attitudes and beliefs that support self-regulation of the learning process and to balance the tendency to control the learning situation with a desire to promote personal autonomy. They believe that instructions must relate to the interest, experiences and personal goals of the learners in order to adequately support motivation. They also claim that an environment, which promotes active learning, should have authentic activities. According to DeCort (1991), Papert and Harel (1991) and Perkins (1992) learning happens especially felicitously when

the learner is consciously engaged in meaningful activities that can provide many opportunities for social interaction and is rich in learning resources. Examples of these activities are exploration, collaboration and computer-based learning (Laws, 1991; Fedler *et al.*, 1993). Also in this environment, students views and values should be sought and valued as they are windows to their knowledge and reasoning (Cobb, 1988; Brown, Collin and Duguid, 1989; Brooks *et al.*, 1993). 'Authentic' assessment is also required. It occurs mostly naturally when it is in a meaningful context and when it relates to authentic concerns and problems faced by students (Brooks *et al.*, 1993). Students progress has to be interpreted via professional judgements together with samples of their work, with both formalised and informal assessment gathered over time. By the same token it is contended that in education, mastery is likely to be more validly inferred via patterns of performance over time, and in various contexts, rather than from single events isomorphically related to narrowly conceived outcome statements such as performance objectives.

Much of the impetus for constructivism as an educational movement stems from a reaction to the over-reliance in classrooms on rote memorisation which is regarded as a serious problem in education (Lipman, 1991). Many critics of education insist the most important goal of school curricula have been based on learner-centred constructivism to promote students who can function successfully in real-world contexts (e.g. Anderson and Roth, 1989; Roth 1989). Recognising that students master only those activities they actually practice (Anderson and Roth, 1989), is an assumption in line with constructivism as well as with rote learning and drill-and -practice philosophy. Some constructivists are intent on teaching pupils to use scientific knowledge in the same way as scientifically literate adults.

2.6.4. Advantages and disadvantages of a constructivist system of education

Constructivism's weaknesses, and some of the constructive views which render it open to criticism, is the fact that knowledge is constructed by individuals. For example, if learning occurs by construction, it is costly in time and when the search is lengthy or unsuccessful, learners' motivation commonly flags. Critics argue that in other cases students remember as well, or even better, when information is provided to them, than when they recreate it (Slamecka and Katsaiti, 1987). Even when discovery learning is successful in acquiring the desired construct, it may take a great

deal of time that could have been spent practising this construct if it had been instructed. Opponents of constructivism point out that to assume that a persons scientific intuitions directly reflect the nature of structure of their knowledge (their alternative frameworks), is to be guilty of a gross over simplification of their psychology. 'Alternative frameworks' need be no more than the ephemeral reflection of a purpose-built and tentative attempt to cope with the social and intellectual demands of the present. On this criticism, I disagree with the critics and share Barbara Jaworski⁶⁰ idea that constructivists hold that knowledge is a social construct in terms of social actions of a community of practices and individuals interpret this construct.

Constructivists recommend that children learn in the context of complex problems (Wiggins, 1993). Critics say that this recommendation is put forward without any evidence of its educational effectiveness. There are two problems with this approach both related to the fact that a complex task will require a large number of competencies. First, the learner who is having difficulty with many of the components can easily be overwhelmed by the process demands of the complex task and secondly, if many components are well mastered, the student will waste a great deal of time repeating the mastered components to get an opportunity to practise the few that needs additional efforts. Critics agree that there are reasons to practise skills within their complex setting. While it seems important, both to motivation and learning, to practise skills from time to time in their full context, is not a reason to make it the principal mechanism of learning. This warrants the critics view that constructivism as terribly utilitarian because it assumes that everything that works is good enough for learning.

The rejection of standardised evaluation to assess learning by constructivists is also criticised. Critics (Dick, 1991) claim that the fundamental problem is the failure to specify precisely the competencies being evaluated and a reliance on subjective judgements, that will open doors to a great deal of cultural bias in assessment (Rist, 1970). Furthermore, if student self-assessment were to dominate education, it would no longer be clear when instructions had failed or succeeded. Also, the notion that instruction should not be pre-planned is also criticised. Critics claim that this cannot

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be an absolute point of view. There are some learning situations where preparing instructions and specific outcomes would not be debated. An example is in the training of pilots and doctors. While medical students and pilots may still construct meaning in accordance with previous knowledge and experiences, they will have to learn, and at times to pre-specified standards. So, some level of pre-planned instruction is needed. Critics also criticise the philosophy by saying that it is a new form of solipsism, meaning that it locates reality entirely in the mind of the learner (beholder). Thus, it specifically denies the existence of involuntary experiences with an outside world, be it through direct perception of something or through vicarious experiences created in the process of communication. Social context of learning is a vital part of constructivism. Critics agree that one should take into account cultural contexts in explaining the ways people learn, and conversely, constructivists must avoid excessive generalisation no matter how well a study seems to be replicated in different countries (Villalbi and Lucas, 1991). While this does include the social transfer of knowledge, rather than its individual creation afresh by each learner responding alone to physical phenomena, constructivists still suffer from the difficulty of making precisely testable predictions.

Despite the above criticism, it is suggested here that constructivist philosophy offers instructional designers an alternative set of values that may significantly influence learning. It is viewed as a solution to the potentially detrimental side effects of the existing instructional practices. For example, it provides a context for learning that supports autonomy and relatedness. According to Bruce Joyce and Marsha Weil (1986) existing methods of teaching (instructivism) emphasise subject matter, social climate, and relationship among participants. In constructivist classrooms, constructivists support development of autonomy by the teacher providing scaffolding to extend the potential development of the learner, by engaging students in using knowledge in modelling problem solving processes and by coaching students in self questioning and other metacognitive skills. In the area of relationships, preferred teaching methods require both collaboration and positive interdependence and emphasise personal responsibility and accountability. Such approaches as co-operative group learning, reciprocal teaching and computer assisted intentional

learning environments (Scardamalia *et al.*, 1989) strongly support such constructivist priorities. Secondly, the learners engage in the learning activity itself. Nowadays students find much of what is presented in school to be inconsistent with their experiential beliefs that form the basis of their world-view. So much of what they learn does not transfer to other applicable settings. Constructivists favour problem solving activities that are linked to student interests, have at least some of the 'messy' attributes of real-world problems and are meaningful and satisfying for students to solve. They further recognise that personal goals, motives, expectations and attitudes critically influence what the individual learns.

Constructivism also supports self-regulated learning by promoting skills and attitudes that enable the learner to assume increased responsibility for the developmental restructuring process. Inherent in the instructivist approach is the assumption that desired changes in behaviour and capabilities will occur as a result of students' successful execution of lesson-controlled instructional strategies. Constructivists recognise that students can develop the capacity to exercise control over their own thought processes, motivation and actions so as to effect desired changes in themselves and their situations (Bandura, 1989; Kember, 1991). Constructivism also strengthens the learners' tendency to engage in intentional learning processes by encouraging the strategic exploration of errors. They see errors as a positive stimulant for the kind of perturbations that create the disequilibrium necessary for self-reflection and conceptual restructuring. Constructivists focus on error recovery procedures and are primarily concerned with learners' ability to apply and manipulate knowledge within authentic task environments and are far less interested in the learners' ability to simply acquire knowledge and to produce right answers. Their framework standards serve the interest of learners in goal setting activities and self-assessment, which research shows provide critical support for continuing motivation to learn (Schunk, 1990).

However, before teachers and administrators adopt constructivism practices, they should understand that constructivism cannot make its appearance in the classroom as a set of isolated instructional methods grafted on to otherwise traditional teaching techniques. Rather, it is a culture, a set of beliefs, norms and practices that constitute the fabric of school life. This culture, like all other cultures, affects the way learners

interact with peers and relate to the teachers. Their patterns of communication, how they are assessed, and even their notion of 'what learning is good for' must all be connected, or the culture risks becoming a fragmented collection of practices that fail to reinforce one another. For example, the constructivist belief that learners are capable of intellectual autonomy must coincide with the belief that students possess a large knowledge base of life experiences and have made sense out of much of what they have experienced. These beliefs are linked with the practice of problem-based learning with relevant and authentic contexts and with the norm of showing mutual respect for one another's ideas in the classroom (Windschitl, 1999).

Therefore, there is a need to design materials in away which will provide the student with greater access to the content. In discussing this concept the researcher has drawn considerably on the work of Waller and Macdonald-Ross of the Open University (UK). 'Access structure' refers to the "co-ordinated use of typographically signaled structural cues that help student to read texts using selective sampling strategies" (Waller, 1979: 175). These cues help the reader to find his/her way about in the text. I believe that for too long we have ignored the fact that students at a distance read instructional texts selectively. Another theme which has informed this thinking is that of 'veto power' over learning which students at a distance can exercise. They are able to make decisions about how they will deal with an instructional package, instructional decisions which are usually denied the internal student. Good design of instructional texts will recognise this veto power.

2.6.5. Some aspects of constructivism applied or worth applying in the development of distance education materials

Constructivism is based on the need to facilitate knowledge rather than teach it in the traditional sense. The work of a facilitator is to create a conducive and friendly atmosphere for learning. Students are given complete freedom to learn when and how they want. The relationship between a learner and a facilitator must be equal so that no one assumes a position of superiority. Constructivism can be said to be applied in certain aspects of distance education as students are free to select courses they want to learn. They are also free to study when they can and to submit their written assignments as specified by the course. The text is written in a friendly manner addressing the learner directly. Comments in written assignments are instructional and

written in a positive and friendly manner. They are meant to facilitate learning, assess students and assign marks or grades to their work. The dialogue between the student and the tutor is an essential part of distance education materials.

Active learning is a vital aspect of constructivism. The purpose of active learning is to help the learner, often by making them use the information encountered. The purpose is also to: enable the writer and learners to build up a dialogue; motivate learners to continue; encourage the learners through successful completion of their work; check the learners' progress; enable the learners to pause and make mental notes of important information; break the text into learning chunks; and provide feedback on the course (Gachui and Matiru, 1989). According to Gachui and Matiru (1989), there are different forms of active learning. The first form of active learning is learning by thinking. A learner may be stimulated to think by being asked to do all of the following: answering questions; making mental notes; summarising; interpreting facts; making connections between facts; transferring knowledge; relating knowledge and information to daily life; solving problems and making inferences. The second form of active learning is learning by writing. Involving the learners in activities is perhaps the most frequently used method in distance education. Even here though, it is important to remember that there must be a variety of written work and that it must always have an instructional purpose. By being asked to do a written activity, the learner does not have a chance to be passive and dull. Instead writing helps to consolidate learning and fix it in the learners' mind. It also tests comprehension. Even mere copying is an aide to memory. Answering questions in writing gives the learners an opportunity to work things out properly. Not only can they apply things to their own situation but to new situations as well.

Lastly, the third type of active learning is learning by doing. This means that the writers must try to improve the learner's skills in a practical way. In any distance education course, the learner may be asked to do any or all the following: experiments; making arts and crafts objects and real things; reading, interpreting and drawing maps; interpreting and constructing tables, charts and graphs; carrying out a project; writing a report on an activity; undertaking an educational visit; solving problems; applying their skills in a real-life situation, such as cooking or farming.

It has already been pointed out that in distance education, the learner must actively be involved in the learning process. In order to do this, writers must write in such a way that they are continually talking to the learner in a friendly and encouraging dialogue. This dialogue should include advice on what to do and how to do it. This encouragement is necessary for the learners so that they don't give up studying. Gachui and Matiru (1989:62) gives the following examples of 'pep talks' or this type of writing: "I hope you enjoyed reading this passage. It is always interesting to learn about new places, isn't it?; I hope you did well on this self-test. If you did, you should go on to the next section; you should spend 15-20 minutes doing this exercise; and well done! you have completed half of the unit. Take a well-earned rest. Have a cup of tea if you want. Then you should be refreshed and ready to start".

Distance learners can also be helped in other ways to read the unit and select important points from it, classify them, develop arguments, formulate concepts and draw conclusions. The writer must therefore build into the text of the units ways to help the learner to do this. One of the things the writer can do is to have a clear heading scheme. This helps the learner to identify main topics and subtopics. In this way, the learner is assisted in picking out the salient ideas and concepts of the unit. Another device the writer can use is to underline or write in bold, difficult terminologies or points they wish to emphasise. The use of boxes also highlights parts of the text that require the learner's special attention. Lastly, the writers can itemise their thoughts by using bullets. These draw the learner's attention to the points being made (Gachui and Matiru, 1989: 62).

A success story of use of constructivism in distance education is Mexico, Telesecundaria. Telesecundaria is a project that has been paid for internally, sustained without external donor support, and thrived despite numerous changes of governments and administrations, political assaults by teachers' unions and other challenges. Over its 35-year existence (Bordon, 2003), Telesecundaria has become more pedagogically sophisticated, integrating the curriculum with community activism and constructivist pedagogy. Students are active learners in ways that lead them to believe that school and life are integrally connected, and that they can play a role in improving both their own personal lives, as well as the lives of others in their

communities, an accomplishment worth noting for even the most traditional schools (Calderoni, 1998).

2.7. Distance education (particularly television broadcast-based) in the face of globalisation of mass communications and the new information technologies

2.7.1. Overview

In an attempt to understand the effects of globalisation of mass communications and the new information technologies on distance education, it is useful to begin by defining globalisation and the new information technologies. Globalisation is:

A process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organisation of social relations and transactions-assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact generating trans-continental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power (Held *et al.*, 1999: 16).

Terry Evans (1995: 358) substantiates this view by pointing out that globalisation “is not simply that the ‘world has got smaller’... [r]ather, some time-space relations are radically altered to an extent which fundamentally affects the way people now view, understand and engage the world in which they live. It is far more than technology which facilitates globalisation, it transcends the economic, social, political and cultural boundaries and is inclusive of processes, structures and product”. Anthony Giddens (1990: 64) describes the concept as: “the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by the events occurring many miles away and vice versa”. Therefore, globalisation is not only something which happens to one, but it is also something which one can participate in. According to Jonathan Hyslop (1999: 7), most definitions of globalisation highlight the following broader dimensions which must be taken into account: the increasing breakdown of geopolitical boundaries; changes in the effectiveness and in some cases, viability of state systems; changes in the subjective experience of time and space; and a cultural shift towards social forms in which such

distinctions are modern/ traditional, or authentic/synthetic appear increasingly unpersuasive.

The globalisation of mass communications has emerged through the new media technologies⁶¹ The distribution of information has proliferated as worldwide satellite, telecommunications and broadcasting links have been established. Therefore, the process of transmission cannot be conceptualised solely by the boundaries and interests of the nation state. Moreover, the domestic hardware revolution (telephone, videocassette recorders (VCRs), radio, television and personal computers), has meant that news and entertainment facilities are available in the private sphere. More recently, the recombination of domestic communications hardware: the telephone, video cassette recorders (VCR), radio, television and personal computers, have impacted on mass media (Scholtz and Steyn, 1998:472). Several trends may be identified. 1) There has been a miniaturisation of the technology. This has affected the transmission of information e.g. news crews are able to report from around the world with the establishment of 'back pack' satellite links. It has also meant that cheaper domestic hardware increasingly has become available. In particular, the Japanese company Sony miniaturised an American invention, the transistor, to build portable radios. This idea was similarly applied to television, telephones, hi-fi, compact discs and home computers. 2) This has allowed audiences to enjoy greater access to sources of information due to the declining costs of hardware equipment, increased satellite links and the introduction of fiber optics. Theoretically, every citizen can receive material from around the world, although the inequitable distribution of incomes clearly compromises this development. This leads to two accompanying factors, the personalisation and autonomisation of the audiences. The former refers to the fragmentation of the audience, as mass entertainment can be consumed in the private rather than the public sphere. As people overcome their technophobia, their autonomy

⁶¹ The new media or information technologies includes: direct-to home (DTH) systems; digitalisation and digital compression technology; digital audio broadcasting and satellite radio; digital terrestrial television; Internet and the whole are of broad-band multi-media; interactive television, combining features of traditional broadcast technology with those of the Net; new technologies in programme production and especially in the 'post-production' stage, involving use of computers, new digital equipment and techniques; and new developments which make it possible to have smaller, more portable and less expensive terminals for uplinking television/radio programmes to satellites (<http://mib.nic.in/nicpart/pbexnetech.htm> date accessed 5/04/2004).

increases as they can consume a greater amount of material, engage in interactivity through telephones and computer networks, use home video cameras and schedule programming through VCRs.

There has been a greater integration of media services at a technological and economic level. From the 1970s onwards, the new media technologies were established to distribute low-cost, world-wide communication. Potentially, the limitations of a few terrestrial television transmitters would be overcome through multi-channel systems. For instance, the digitalisation of television has allowed for the compression of over 500 terrestrial and cable channels. Commercial, educational and entertainment information could all be sent on the same highways. This has led to convergence or 'synergy' of different technologies. A definition for convergence by the European Commission's influential Green Paper on Convergence identifies convergence as the ability of different network platforms to carry essentially similar kinds of services and the subsequent 'coming together' of the telephone, television and personal computer, to create new household devices with multiple functions (European Commission 1997b: 7).

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) describes convergence as:

The provision of new services over existing infrastructure, development of new types of infrastructure, and the enhancement of existing services and technologies to provide new capabilities; and the integration of technological or market capability across previously separated technologies, markets or politically defined industry structures (South African Ministry for Posts, Telecommunications and Broadcasting, 1997).

In the past, broadcasting was defined as 'point-to-multi-point' communication, with information being transmitted from one point to a variety of other points without the possibility of direct interaction or feedback. Technological convergence has changed the media's interactive abilities with the advent of interactive television, it is possible to have video on-demand. Soon consumers may no longer need to switch channels or wait for their favorite programmes. They will merely call up what they want to watch, whenever it suits them. With some technical limitations, films and video programmes can now be accessed through the Internet while telecommunication with video has become feasible. Telephones will soon enable users to see, apart from hear, the person

at the other end of the line (in 1998 this was already possible commercially) (Scholtz and Steyn, 1998: 473-474). Developments also include advances towards compressing or 'squeezing' more and more signals into smaller capacities while using less energy than before. While this development ensures the availability of a wider range of information, it also reduces the time it takes to access information and the price at which it is made available to the users.

These reforms have been accompanied by several different theories of media globalisation. Firstly, the globalisation of mass communications is said to have allowed for the growth of media conglomerates (Keane, 1992: 27; Murdock quoted in Dahlgren, 2000: 5; Rifkin, 2001). In the light of greater internationalisation, national governments have either loosened ownership restrictions or turned a blind eye to the expansion of these corporations. This has been justified by the theories of market-liberalism and deregulating policies which are designed to encourage the free flow of investment. Further, as media companies can aid politicians during elections, they have been perceived as valuable allies. Therefore, the new media's development may parallel the concentration of ownership within the newspaper and publishing industries, as the new outlets are controlled by fewer and fewer media moguls or conglomerates. This has a significant impact on the media's role as a public watchdog. Many critics contend that global corporations either uncritically propagate political elites or have so many controls within the political mainstream that they are serving their own, rather than the public's interest (Wheeler, 1997: 176-177). Jurgen Habermas's argument that the media have become the site for ideological manipulation, increasingly appears to be true. Due to the dynamics of globalisation and conglomeration, the citizen's democratic rights are being undermined by the needs of the state and the media companies (Wheeler, 1997: 202).

The undermining of the citizen's democratic rights due to the dynamics of globalisation and conglomeration leads one to ask whether a new type of media system, placing the citizen's needs first, could be organised in a global environment. This would have to be independent from both the state and market controls. John B. Thompson (1990) has suggested:

Since the deployment of new communication technologies is rendering mass communication increasingly global in character, the principle of regulated pluralism must itself be placed within a trans-national context... given the trans-national character of the new media of transmission, the regulation necessary to avert this outcome will have to be both national and international. Particular states, as well as states in association with one another, will have to take steps to ensure that the new channels of transmission which are being opened up by the deployment of new technologies will not be in such away that pluralism and responsiveness will be sacrificed on the altar of free enterprise. [This]...responsibility must be openly and directly faced, to fail to do so would be to lose, or significantly and perhaps irreversibly to diminish, an unprecedented opportunity for the enrichment of social and political life in modern societies (Thompson, 1990).

Yet it should be remembered that the globalisation of the media still remains within the purview of the Northern rather than poorer Southern countries due to the distribution of wealth, income and investment of capital from the western media companies.

Secondly, information technology (IT) could create new geo-political systems of global domination/dependency relations between the 'information-rich' and 'information-poor' countries. Information technology could be an institutional framework for cajoling poor nations, their leaders and elites into a new information and political economic system controlled by the West. Information technology development leads to dependence on equipment, spare parts and access to communication and information. Finally, the fact that IT is designed to serve primarily Western (particularly U.S.A.) interests is, made clear by Allen Greenberg (1985), then a senior foreign service officer associated with U.S. telecommunications development affairs. In his view, the objective of promoting IT globally is very much the same economic motive professed for establishing development aid in the late 1950s:

Third world telecommunications are of considerable interest to the U.S. for reasons ranging from enlightened altruism to the bread and butter concerns of trade balances and jobs. The U. S. with its large internal market, advanced technology and extensive aid programs could be the world's leader in assisting less developed countries in expanding and improving their telecommunication networks (Greenberg, 1985).

Lastly, from the definitions of globalisation given earlier, it is clear that globalisation of information through advancement of technology has resulted in the intensification of cross-border relationships thus strengthening intercultural penetration and interaction. Also, globalisation and technological advancement facilitates enculturation⁶² (Renteln, 2001: 233). Enculturation takes place over three levels (Mathews, 2000: 12-16). (a) The first is at the level of unconsciousness where ones shaping by a particular set of social practices and values acclimatise one to how people comprehend self and the world. (b) The second level lies at the consciousness state but beyond ones control where human behaviour is founded on the reaction and compliance to the pressure exerted by the surrounding forces. Under this level, some people are forced to comply with some values adopted by the majority of people in their society which may differ from the formers' own. (c) The third is the cultural supermarket level where people are free to pick and choose the values and ideas they want. This is the level of both consciousness and control.

However, nationalist and leftist discourse about culture has tended to follow a simplistic narrative of cultural imperialism⁶³ (Keniston, 1998), which is related to the idea of the suppression of an indigenous culture by advancing capitalism. However, globalisation can be seen as the harbinger of new and creative cultural developments. The cultural imperialism model simply assumes that cultural goods are dumped on a mindless consumer market by the powers that be. Nevertheless this ignores the extent to which cultural creativity and democracy from below stimulates the generation of new cultural products. This cultural imperialism model has tended to feed on a particularly vicious form of nationalist ideology, which contrasts the authentic and the indigenous with the synthetic and foreign (Hyslop, 1999:10). This leads frequently to a repressive practice where governments, apparently to protect indigenous culture, but in fact, as Marshall Berman suggests, to deflect the subversive potential of modernist cultural practice, crackdown on cultural imports.

⁶² Enculturation is a process whereby individuals learn their group's culture through experience, observation and instruction.

⁶³ Cultural imperialism is the policy, extant in some nations today, of insisting legally on a single culture and prohibiting all other cultures, including all languages that are not the languages of the dominant group (Keniston, 1998:139).

In thinking about the cultural dimensions of globalisation, it is important to note here some of the ideas of Roland Robertson (1992), who is an important thinker of globalisation. His work however seems to have been entirely by-passed in the African debate. Robertson makes the point that the economic has tended to be 'thematized' in existing accounts of global linkage. He directs ones attention instead to the realm of culture. In globalisation, for Robertson, difference does not disappear, rather the world becomes, in Robertsons's phrase, 'one place'. Social actors have to advance their positions in the context of the whole range of other positions. In Robertson's view, there is no simple cultural contest between old and new. Rather globalisation stimulates 'tradition' to revise itself and advance in new forms, while modernist discourse are forced to acknowledge that they cannot command universal respect (Robertson, 1992).

While the trans-national communications systems tend to disrupt existing forms of bonding and solidarity, they are new ways of forging cultural communities. The use of video by groups of migrants all over the world (Indians, Chinese, Turks, et cetera.) are telling cases. The circulation and consumption of ethnically specific information and entertainment on video serves to construct and maintain cross-national 'electronic communities' of geographically dispersed people's who would otherwise lose their ties with tradition and its active perpetuation (Gillespie, 1989; Naficy, 1993). Thus, while official nationalist policies against further dissemination of the trans-national media system seem to be more impossible and ineffectual than ever, social groups inside and between nations seem to have found informal ways to construct their own collective identities within the boundaries of the system that units and binds all. Marcus and Fischer suggested;

The apparent increasing global integration suggests not the elimination of cultural diversity, but rather opportunities for counterpoising diverse alternatives that nonetheless share a common world, so that each can be understood better in the other's light (1986: 136).

What counts as 'local' and therefore 'authentic' is not a fixed content, but subject to change and modification as a result of the domestication or what James Lull (1992: 17) calls, 'transculturation of imported cultural goods'. As Joseph Tobin observes in the context of Japanese consumer culture, "what was marked as foreign and exotic yesterday can become foreign but familiar today and traditionally Japanese

tomorrow” (1992: 26). Tobin mentions the example of Sukiyaki, now considered a ‘traditional’ Japanese food, but was actually borrowed from Europeans. Such an example indicates that the apparent increasing global integration does not simply result in the elimination of cultural forms which are marked by local specificity. If, in other words, the global is the site of the homogeneous (or the common) and the local the site of diverse and the distinctive, then the latter can, in today’s integrated world system only constitute itself in and through concrete reworking and appropriations of the former. Diversity then, is to be seen not in terms of local autonomy but in terms of local reworkings and appropriations.

Collins (1991) discusses the relationship of the U.S. culture and Canada’s distinctive identity. The U.S. media has been involved in Canada for over 100 years, yet there has been a generalised resistance to the adoption of this foreign culture. Similarly, it has been noted that television broadcasting has extended over national boundaries in Europe for some time (Jacka, 1990). As Europe currently resists attempts to create a single regional identity, it would seem that this cultural invasion has failed to alter dramatically individual nationalities within the area (Moore, 1996: 189).

The diverse is not made up of fixed differences, but is an ever-fluctuating, ever-evolving proliferation of expressions of possibilities active in any situation. Some are accommodating, while others are resistant to dominant cultural trends or interpretations (Marcus and Fisher, 1986:116). Two things follow from this. 1) One has to recognise the hybrid, syncretic and croelised⁶⁴, always already ‘contaminated’ nature of diversity in today’s global cultural order. It is a fluid diversity emanating from constant cultural traffic and interaction (Hannerz, 1990: 237; Tomlison, 1999: 141) rather than from the persistence of original, rooted and traditional ‘identities’. 2) Ulf Hannerz (1992:155-256) calls this ‘the global ecumene’ which is bounded not through a replication of uniformity, but through an organisation or orchestration of diversity, a diversity that never adds up to a perfectly coherent, unitary whole.

⁶⁴ Croelisation is a term advanced by Ulf Hannerz (1992: 96) to refer to the process where meanings and meaningful forms from different historical sources, originally separated from one another in space, come to mingle extensively.

In conclusion, globalisation with all its economic, technological, ideological and social trends does carry the seeds of cultural convergence and homogenisation, understood as openness towards different and divergent cultural experiences, to the extent that intercultural competence as well as intercultural experience ensue (Hannerz, 1992: 239). Being a citizen of the world implies the possession of cultural disposition, which is not limited to constraints of locality, but recognises global belonging, openness to the diversity of global cultures, and preparation to understand and respect cultural perspectives of others. The local and the global do not inherently exist as rivals or cultural polarities, but as mutually interpenetrating principles (Tomlison, 1999: 185-186, 196). However, if one thinks of the cultural interaction process in the global ecumene, it would be obvious that besides being a two way process, it takes place in all levels of enculturation (consciousness and unconsciousness). It should be noted that, in a market economy under the rule of law, it is in people's own interest to respect the cultural patterns and interest of others (Madison, 1998:14). Thus, it is noteworthy that a global culture is in the making and systems are converging, but traditional local cultures will not be totally abolished. They will continue to co-exist with cosmopolitan practices. However, what is threatened is the idea of exclusive and virtually self-sufficient national cultures (Hirst and Thompson, 1999: 266). Therefore, it is clear that globalisation of mass communication and convergence of technologies has a lot to offer to the African continent.

2.7.2. The benefits of globalisation of mass communication and advancement of technology to distance education in Africa

Africa will have to find creative solutions in order to 'leapfrog' previous eras of technology in order to be a player in the global society perpetuated by information technology. These solutions must be utilised effectively in the provision of distance education assuming that Africa is serious about tackling the educational access problem. Comments cited in the South African Green Paper on Science and Technology (Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, 1996: 80) are encouraging. In this paper, there is acknowledgement of the fact that information and communication technologies are bringing about dramatic changes in teaching processes the world over. The Green Paper recognises that "Technology as a mediator in the learning process can play at least three distinct roles: better deployment of the

education resources to achieve national goals by making it easier to share educational material and teaching expertise; enhancing individual and small-group learning; improving access to education through among others distance learning; and removing the mystique around, if not the outright fear of, modern technology, a prerequisite for preparing a workforce that will be relevant for both current and future work” (Sedibe, 1998: 95-96).

However, the limitations of basic infrastructure, such as the absence of electricity, telephones, a reliable postal system and even postal addresses, may often render the use of these kinds of technologies impossible in most of the African continent (Sedibe, 1998: 95-96; Jensen, 2002; Wolff, 2002). It has been noted in many policy and research documents that South Africa is in a significantly different position from other African countries concerning use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) (Jansen, 2002). The following descriptive analysis indicates this:

Despite recent progress, Africa remains far behind the developed world in terms of Internet connectivity and usage. For example, recent statistics show that the total Internet users in Africa are 8 million, with about 1.5-2.5 million people outside North Africa and South Africa. This is about 1 Internet user for every 250-400 people compared to a world average of 1 Internet user to every 15 people (Jansen, 2002). North Africa and South Africa have a higher Internet connectivity and usage than the rest of Africa.

Nevertheless, when examining quantitative access to ICTs in South Africa in two key networks, that of Multi Purpose Community Centres and schools, it was evident that the implementation of policy commitments is not, as yet, making significant inroads into increasing access to ICTs in South Africa (Sedibe, 1998; Jansen, 2002). The descriptions of schools that have ICTs, when compared with the snapshot overview of technology infrastructure at a selection of South African schools, showed the extent to which access to such technology remains with the few (Department of Education and Department of Communications, 2001). This is not the national intention and indeed, most agencies involved in this area strive to ensure that ICTs are available to all and do not perpetuate the inequalities of the past. Nevertheless the ideal is not easily attainable, processes of redistribution are slow, and many of the initiatives remain at the pilot phase. While a sound framework for harnessing the use of ICTs has been established, the reality that the vast majority of South Africans have little or no access to ICTs, cannot be ignored (SAIDE, 1999; Department of Education and Department of Communications, 2001).

So, for developing countries to share and collaborate in 'internationalisation' forms of education, they need to develop expertise so that they do not become only consumers of another country's products, however irrelevant they may be, but can act as partners in an enterprise, as well as gaining access to new resources (Williams, 2000). New computer and telecommunications technologies, and in particular satellites, wireless technology, telecommunications and computing, offer the possibilities of open access to education. Students can now, in terms of technology, access any course they want, at any time, from anywhere in the world (Prasad, 1997). This in turn offers the possibility of a truly global classroom, unlimited by race, religion or nationality, with multi-ethnic courses, students and teachers. Teachers and students can be drawn from many countries, and study the same course together at the same time. Perhaps most important of all, the new information technologies offer the potential to empower individual learners, to enable education to be learner centred, focused on the needs and demands of learners, rather than those of the providers of education, and to encourage the development of higher order learning skills, such as critical thinking, knowledge construction, and collaborative learning (Bates, 1997).

The British Open University, for example, offers a master's programme in distance education. Students download teaching materials from the web, contact their tutors through email, and are encouraged to take part in computer conferences as part of the course. Whereas the use of computer links for tutoring or for the delivery of material is built on to an existing course without changes to its structure, the development of an internet course of this kind means that students can enroll directly on to a different kind of course. Constraints on enrolment are no longer a matter of geography but of access to the Internet and the ability to pay the enrolment fee and costs of communication. There are beginning to be examples of this in the South, though more often within a framework of North-South co-operation than of indigenous Southern development or, indeed, South-South co-operation. The Monterrey Institute of Technology, for example, is a well established and high-status private university in Mexico and has worked with the University of British Columbia to develop five web-based courses at master's level in educational technology. The programme is specialised, attracting students in hundreds not thousands, and has enabled Monterrey to extend its teaching into an area that would not otherwise have been possible. Significantly, however, all the teaching materials were developed at the University of

British Colombia, in consultation with colleagues from the Monterrey Institute. The new technologies have made possible a new framework for inter-university co-operation but this still follows the same pattern of the North-South export trade (Bates and Escamilla de los Santos 1997; Wolff, 2002).

Worth documenting is the collaboration between the Graduate Programme in Culture, Communication and Media Studies, University of Kwazulu-Natal, and University of Washington Bothell (UWB), USA, Department of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences Programme, in offering an online course called Electronic Media in Comparative Perspectives. The course is offered to American and South African honours/masters students. Currently, the course enrolls 15 students from both University of KwaZulu - Natal and University of Washington Bothell (UWB). The student enrolment is limited because this kind of instruction has proved to be very highly labour intensive to facilitate and assess. These students are engaged in electronic dialogue on contemporary issues e.g. pornography, the World Trade Centre September 11 bombings, etc. All the course offerings are put up on the web and instructions and discussions are done through discussion forums (Keyan Tomaselli, telephone interview, 2 April 2004).

Also, the World Bank in 1997 established an African Virtual University. The Bank argued that a virtual university, using satellite communication and computer networks to share teaching, could help the beleaguered universities of Africa improve the quality of their teaching in Science, Engineering and Business and expand enrolments in these areas. The World Bank and other funding agencies provided start-up funding, apparently between \$ 5 million and \$ 10 million but with the intention that it should in due course become a freestanding, self-financing, virtual education institution. The virtual university would develop, or buy in, computer-based teaching material and make this available to African universities by franchising existing courses or developing new ones on demand (Perraton, 2000: 146; Wolff, 2002). By 2002, the AVU had a number of successes. A total of 31 learning centres (LCs) had been established in 17 countries. African Virtual University had delivered over 3, 500 hours of courses and seminars in both English and French to about 18,000 students and seminar participants. Typical subjects taught included C++, export development,

business administration, and foreign languages. It also offered a digital library with 1, 000 full-text journals and a catalogue of subject-related web links (Wolff, 2002).

In spite of these successes, in retrospect it is clear that the AVU did not recognise the full extent of the complexity, cost and human resources required for it to become a degree granting international distance learning institution in Africa (Wolff, 2002). African Virtual University's choice of technology-satellite based broadcasting television, while perhaps justifiable in 1997, has been relatively expensive and inflexible. Asynchronous on-line learning is now considered the technology of choice for virtual distance learning. African Virtual University also decided to start with courses from the elite U.S.A. and other developed country universities to broadcast to Africa. This resulted, rightly or wrongly, in an impression of 'colonisation' from the North. Further, AVU centres were inadequately integrated into universities where they were located. Not enough attention was paid to governance, training and maintenance, and many of the centres have had technical and management problems (Wolff, 2002).

According to Wolff (2002), by early 2001, it was clear that AVU needed to rethink its vision, content, delivery modes and business plan. In light of this, a strategic review was completed in mid 2001 and from 2002 was being implemented. In this review, AVU was no longer aspiring to be a freestanding university, but rather to become a technology and content broker and advisor for participating institutions, serving as a technical resource and catalyst for ICT investments. African Virtual University services was to include: assisting partner African institutions in upgrading their access to high-speed internet connectivity and in other technology improvements; building the capacity of partner universities to develop and deliver ICT-enhanced distance education programmes; facilitating delivery of on-line accredited programmes; developing a web-based portal for the African educational community to share information and find new distance learning products; and providing expanded digital library services. The main technology to be used will be asynchronous Internet connectivity rather than satellite television. African Virtual University also expected to take ten years before reaching a break-even point in its financing. During the next ten years (from 2002), it expected to get most of its finances from international and bilateral funding agencies, and only gradually to build up recovery of costs from

beneficiaries (Wolff, 2002)⁶⁵. In mid 2002, AVU transferred from Washington D.C. to Nairobi and its establishment as an NGO fully independent of the World Bank was complete.

The MBA programmes offered by institutions in U.S.A., Canada, Australia, Britain et cetera are now available in most parts of the developing countries. Many developing countries with limited educational resources can have wider access to the world educational and training resources to supplement and complement their efforts to provide education to large numbers. The wider access also may result in heightening the competitive environment. For example, as mentioned earlier, some of the world's best management and computer programmes developed in certain advanced countries are available to many in other countries, including the developing ones. This is hoped to ignite the spirit of competition among the local institutions. The breaking up of borders by technology may threaten the survival of mediocre institutions/programmes. The exposure to the best may motivate others to improve their own performance. The free market may reject the non-performers. The globalised distance education programmes of institutions with a spirit of performance may bring competitiveness in the working of local distance education institutions. This process may result in better institutional performance (Prasad, 1997).

The instant connectivity of resource persons and the easy accessibility of resource materials in distance education made possible by the communication technologies will help in learning from others expertise and experience. The different methods adopted by distance education institutions in the development, production and delivery of materials is easily available to others through database systems. The information technology has made the distance education processes and the products more open enabling others to use and build on the existing knowledge and practices. Globalisation in this sense further facilitates the process of learning from others' experiences. Partnerships for enrichment are made possible again through technologies, and can contribute to providing services which are beyond the capacity

⁶⁵ Laurence Wolff (2002) is referenced extensively in this study because a comprehensive study of the African Virtual University's first seven years of existence as a World Bank sponsored project to its present status as an independent business, is not available, perhaps not yet undertaken (<http://ncsu.edu/ncsu/earn/avrflc.html>) date accessed 20/03/2004)

of any one institution. The partnership between Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada and Indira Gandhi National Open University, India, is offering a Masters Programme in Distance Education (MADE) under the Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme. This is one such example of international partnership activity facilitated by the process of globalisation (Prasad, 1997). Through this partnership, the partners have learned that course contents should be pitched to the learners' educational levels and adapted to the learner's environment (Prasad, 1997; Sharma and Chaudhary, 2003). Although the basic content of shared teaching and learning materials stays the same, the examples, arguments or explanations used must be adapted to reflect the culture of the partner institution (Sharma and Chaudhary, 2003).

The European Union activities in the promotion of distance education are also influenced by wider processes of globalisation (Field, 1995). For example, the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU)⁶⁶, formed in 1987, has promoted effective collaboration and cooperation in faculty exchange, curriculum design, and development and research (Sharma and Chaudhary, 2003). Thus, the educational needs of small developing countries can be met effectively by the partnership arrangements particularly in the development of learning materials which is a very capital intensive activity in distance education.

However, in situations of uneven development, the information superhighways may be used more for 'invasion' than for access. More access may result in the danger of certain sets of countries dominating the educational scene of countries with less resources. Terry Evans rightly observes that "globalisation presents nations with a dilemma: they access the world, but the world invades them" (Evans, 1995). The access is also driven by market demands, which need not necessarily reflect the national needs of countries at the receiving end. Added to this, the access to global programmes is mostly restricted to more affluent sections of society in view of the costs involved. This may further accentuate the educational inequalities in developing countries. The partnership arrangements may result in assigning a secondary role to institutions from the developing countries (Evans, 1995) thus, losing their initiative

⁶⁶ EADTU members are educational institutions in the European Union (EU) (Sharma and Chaudhary, 2003).

and self-identity. These fears persuade many to consider globalisation as another form of neo-colonialism.

Also, the development of distance education material programmes for the world may be an impossible task. At present the materials developed in one context are mostly used in a wider context. Developing relevant curriculum for the international context is a difficult task. More difficult is getting the educational materials developed in a particular cultural context to suit a different cultural context. The globalised learning materials and the delivery systems should take into account the diversity of the world cultural context. The learners' needs may also vary accordingly (Jenkins, 1996).

The biggest barrier, though, is content: in the form of language, relevancy and cultural issues. Studying at a distance is difficult enough. Studying in a second or sometimes third language, especially where there is a great deal of printed material, is even more difficult. Translation costs are high, and getting good quality translations is not easy. In many cases the materials have been developed for a different type of learner, with different cultural assumptions and levels of prior experience in learning. Materials may use case studies, examples and forms of language that are unknown in another country (Murdock, 2000: 54; Bates, 1997; *The Economist*, 2000b: 53).

Many countries in the less developed world perceive dangers in this globalisation. Guy (1995) writes of his concern about the intrusive effects of Western curricula and pedagogies which have been imported into Papua New Guinea with little accommodation to indigenous culture and learning. All too often, existing cultural values have been replaced by ones of the dominant ideology, and many indigenous languages are under threat from the spread of English, which is seen to provide socio-mobility and improvement in employment prospects in the formal sector. English as the language of instruction and the education system generally have failed to deliver the desired goods to most Papua New Guineans (Swatridge, 1985). Instead it is the death of indigenous languages which is delivered. Dixon (1991: 247) suggests that as schooling, radio, television and other trappings of Western-style civilisation advance through New Guinea as they are likely to, perhaps 90 per cent of the languages will be threatened with extinction.

It is feared that the globalisation of communication and education will both speed-up the advance and reduce the tolerance of difference, as Evans (1995: 266) point out:

Many new forms of open distance education which are mediated via the Internet, or through satellite broadcasting, cannot be achieved with any substantial accommodation to local conditions... there is little likelihood of a myriad of small, local, traditional cultures being nurtured within globalisation.

Optimistic is Edwards (1994: 11), who maintains that with globalisation there comes “a pressure for local autonomy and identity”, and “the affirmation of local, regional, ethnic identities”, and that “the integration of the globe reconfigures rather than supplants diversity”. Denise McQuail (1994) uses the term ‘transculturation’ to describe the interchange between cultures. The expectation that the globalisation of communication will destroy indigenous cultures fails to acknowledge that other forms of communication between cultures have been in existence for some time, and the fact that cultures survive such transculturation is evidence of cultural ‘resistance’ and ‘adaptation’. Both McQuail (1994) and Ang (1991) discuss the ability of communities to redefine the material that is received. Ang terms this process ‘indigenisation’ (1991: 6). Audiences will interpret media messages in different ways, very much dependent upon their circumstances and positions in society on the basis of class, gender or ethnicity (Beng, 1994; Kishore, 1994; McQuail, 1994). The educational aim must be to assist learners to be capable of exercising choice and obtaining from the media knowledge that which they deem culturally appropriate and useful. Education is about opening up new horizons; about seeing problems in new ways; seeing new possibilities and new opportunities. Education is also about getting the skills and knowledge to seize those opportunities. So it’s about enabling learners to change the way they interact with the world. Education is also about recognising and respecting the different ways of seeing the world:

The task for researchers and educators in a post-colonial world is to develop better understandings of the relationships between difference, identity and power and to develop effective pedagogues which acclaim difference as the basis of genuine democratic forms of social and educational organisation. (Guy, 1995: 81).

On the other hand, a number of researchers point out how distance education and the use of computer-mediated communication for educational programmes amplify

existing divisions, by either embedding the authority of the teacher, or privileging access and the voices of students from dominant groups, emphasising the power of a particular language, generally English (Evans 1995; Stokes and Stokes 1996, Earle 1999, Perraton 2000). A warning is issued that failure to fully use this technology carries the risk of further increasing the gap between these (developing) countries and developed ones' (World Bank 1995: 85; Perraton, 2000).

The greatest problem in exploiting computers in developing countries is the shortage of trained personnel often due to the passive role played by governments (Williams, 2000). Few of these countries are able to train all the technicians, programmers and system analysts they require to operate computer-based systems, even supposing that the hardware has been provided (Hawkridge, 1992: 92). Robertson (1988), in commenting on the shortage of trained people in Kenya, sees the main problem as being a lack of those who can manage multi-user systems. Computers may be installed with the help of foreign aid, but they are under-used because of lack of staff. In some cases, they are abused because staff capable of using them commit fraud. Inadequately supervision by others who do not understand how computers can be used properly in running businesses or government departments also result in under-usage. Managers who are unsympathetic to computers, possibly because they fear or simply do not understand them, hold back their enterprises.

The reality is that information-technology based distance education depends on a well developed national information technology infrastructure consisting of: extensive telecommunications networks (based on telephone lines/digital switches) reaching into most homes and businesses; international communications standards for data transmission (e.g. TCP/IP⁶⁷, ISDN⁶⁸ ,for video –conferencing; network protocols

⁶⁷ TCP/IP-TCP stands for Transmission Control Protocol and IP stands for Internet Protocols. They are protocols that allow computers to communicate with each other (<http://www.cssn.com/webservices/glosary/> date accessed 2 April 2004).

⁶⁸ ISDN stands for Integrated Services Digital Network. It combines voice and digital network services in a single medium, making it possible to offer customers digital services as well as voice connections through a single wire (<http://www.cssn.com/webservices/glosary/> date accessed 2 April 2004).

suitable for the Internet service providers (SLIP⁶⁹; PPP⁷⁰); national coverage by Internet service providers; adequate bandwidth to the desktop; and workstations for students operating to common standards, currently one requires pentium quality workstations or equivalent, 28k modem speed, Netscape 3.1 browsers, and access to the Internet. These are challenging requirements even for most developed countries. Even in Canada, there are relatively few school classrooms that can meet these standards. There is therefore, a widening in the gap between the rich and poor in terms of access to communications technologies, and a consequent widening of the gap between rich and poor nations (Bates, 1997; Perraton, 2000). In many ways, the greatest disparity is not between rich and poor countries. For instance, wealthy elites in even the poorest countries can communicate globally with each other much more easily than they can with people in the *barriadas* and ghettos of their own cities. Johannesburg is better connected to London than to Soweto.

Nelson Mandela highlighted the serious consequences of this trend for developing countries. "The present reality is that the technology gap between developed and developing nations is actually widening... most of the developing world has no experience of what reality accessible communications can do for their society and their economy" (Mandela, 1995).

It must also be noted that emerging technologies have the potential of widening the gap between the educated and the under-educated. Distance education has been championed as a means of providing equitable access for continuing education regardless of socio-economic status. If distance education becomes increasingly technologically based, then it will become a privilege of the well-educated who are able to afford the latest technology to access educational programmes. One solution to this dilemma may be learning centres or telecentres where the technology is equally available to all segments of society. The learning centre has been promoted as a supportive student-centred approach and an alternative to isolated distance learning

⁶⁹ SLIP stands for Serial Line Internet Protocol. A protocol used to run Internet protocols over serial lines such as telephone circuits, interconnecting two systems (<http://www.cssn.com/webservices/glosary/> date accessed 2 April 2004).

⁷⁰ PPP stands for point-to-point protocol. It provides a method for transmitting packets over serial point-to-point links (<http://www.cssn.com/webservices/glosary/> date accessed 2 April 2004).

(Sewart, 1987). The multiplicity of provision offered in a learning centre can address the negative bias that new technologies may present to the under-educated (Garrison, 1990). Telecentres or learning centres have been hailed as the solution to development problems around the world because of their ability to provide desperately needed access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Gómez and Hunter, 1999). Telecentres may be defined as strategically located facilities providing public access to ICT-based services and applications. They are typically equipped with some combination of telecommunication services such as telephony, fax, e-mail and Internet (via dial-up or ISDN, high-speed telecommunications network); office equipment such as computers, CD-ROM, printers and photocopiers; multimedia hardware and software, including radio, television and video; and meeting spaces for local businesses or community use, training and so on (Oestmann and Dymond, 2001: 3).

In their basic form, such centres may be no more than public call offices or telekiosks run by local shopkeepers to provide telephone and fax services. In their more advanced form, they aim to be multipurpose development agencies, offering info-exchange tailored to suit government and community requirements for tele-education, teletraining, telemedicine, teletrading and telecommerce (Latchen and Walker, 2001: vii-viii; Oestmann and Dymond, 2001). The advanced concept, as developed and promoted by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), called Multipurpose Community Centres (MCTs), may include facilities such as libraries, training workshops, seminars rooms and office space for local enterprises, and provide services such as video conferencing, distance education, training in ICTs, telework, telemedicine, telehealth and even telebanking and e-commerce. Telecentres can also function as community information centres, providing access to databases and receiving and posting information of general interest to local people (e.g. government notices, information on the spread of diseases, weather information, prices of farm products, and educational opportunities. Their purpose are to: expand access to ICT-based services; extend the reach of public services such as education, health and social services; provide information of general interest to the local community, including government information, and of special interest to specific groups such as farmers, local business and non-governmental organisations (NGOs); and provide

access to infrastructure, technology support and advice for the development of business (Oestmann and Dymond, 2001: 3-4).

One of the advantages of telecentres is that they provide a means of delivering public and private services to rural and remote locations without incurring immediate large investments. Fulfilling these goals, they are expected to have a positive impact on the socio-economic development of the communities they serve, helping to: develop rural and remote infrastructures; provide rural regions with better public services and improved local administration; generate employment and foster socio-economic development; integrate relatively isolated communities into the national and international information network and thus accelerate exchange of private goods and services; transfer expertise in a number of areas, such as agriculture, to and from the community; and give local producers access to market information, thus reducing the need for middlemen and increasing rural incomes (Oestmann and Dymond, 2001: 4). Thus, in South Africa, schools without infrastructure for viewing of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* or educational television could benefit from the use of telecentres.

Other ways of equipping developing countries to live with globalisation with honour and purpose are international collaborative arrangements which should be based on national priorities as identified by appropriate authorities at the national level. In defining the rules of competition, the nation concerned should use its privilege of regulation to protect its national interest, emphasise more on accessibility and transfer of know-how of distance education than on materials and programmes (Jenkins, 1996; Prasad, 1997). This would strengthen the self-sustainability of institutions in developing countries. The local institutions, as partners in the international collaboration, can play an effective and critical role only when they are capable of making value addition to the process. This value addition should take care of localisation of materials and services, adaptation of materials, sensitisation of the processes to the local cultures etc. This type of contribution will neutralise the possible dominance of resource rich outside agencies (Jenkins, 1996); and state intervention would be necessary. The nation state may have to actively intervene to minimise the distortions of globalisation processes. According to this line of argument, the state should subsidise and support the learners from the weaker sections

of the society to use the opportunities of global distance education programmes. The state can also play an important role in building the necessary information technology infrastructure for enabling the distance education institutions in developing countries to participate as equal partners in global distance education programmes (Prasad, 1997).

Another strategy is to develop low-cost alternatives to or variations of new information technologies that are appropriate to the current levels of development of a particular country. One way of doing this is to by-pass the energy and terrestrial-based telecommunications networks that have not yet reached into villages. Miller (1996) suggests for instance the development of grid-free village level energy sources that can provide local power sources, not just for cooking and heating (thereby saving precious wood), but also for education and training purposes. With local sources of energy, students can use computers and CD-ROM technology for their learning.

Further, the privileged elite in developing countries should not be ignored, but be included in the process of provision of ICTs for distance education. Most of the prestigious universities as well as most leading businesses have relatively good Internet and international telecommunication links, even in the poorest countries. Through these organisations, a high-tech technology hub can be created in each major centre, providing two-way satellite communications, high-speed international telecommunications links, multimedia workstations, and labs, and high-speed internet services. These can become centres of excellence for the development of new education and training services for the admittedly elite sections of the country. These centres can link to other regional centres, and can be used to provide training for the industrial and business sectors within their own communities. The importance of such hi-tech centres of excellence is that they could provide the elite within each country with the knowledge and skills needed to ensure their country does not fall behind and to emphasise to key decision-makers the importance of investment in such technologies for the development of their own country (Bates, 1997).

Therefore, the globalisation of information and communication technologies and lack of access to these technologies in most of the developing countries, is a major reason why public service broadcasting is not only relevant in a global economy and digital

age, but arguably more relevant than ever (Dahlgren, 2000: 5; Murdock, 2000: 54; William, 2000). Without its commitment to universality, developing countries will be left with deep and enduring inequalities of access to information, knowledge, education and representation. According to Ruth Teer-Tomaselli and Keyan Tomaselli (1996: 220), the public service broadcasting remains an important institutional arrangement in South Africa in light of the need to redress the disparities caused by capital and apartheid in the first place, and legitimated during the apartheid via broadcasting in the second place. They argued that future broadcasting strategies should take advantage of the very nature of South Africa's scrambled periodisation, turn it to an advantage and thereby provide access to the entire population no matter their location within the pre-modern to post-modern trajectory. Similarly, Nadia Bulbulia said:

The challenge now for public and private broadcasters alike, is to fulfil the requirements of the IBA Act and to develop programmes that entertain, educate and informs, whilst correcting the exclusive policies of the past (Bulbulia, 1998: 233).

According to Miller (1996), the traditional 'mass media', 'second generation' form of distance education, using mass media such as broadcasting, television and radio, has been very successful in countries where it has been professionally applied, such as at the Sukhothai Thammithirat Open University of Thailand, the Korean National Open University, the Alama Iqbal Open University in Pakistan, and the Indira Gandhi National Open University in India. For those countries wishing to educate very large numbers of relatively poor people, mass media are still more appropriate technologies than the new information technologies. Therefore, this study suggests that television broadcast-based distance education remains important especially in the developing countries in the light of the need to increase access to education, redress the disparities caused by globalisation of mass communication and by the lack of access to information and communication technologies. It is the focus of this study to investigate the role and use of mass media in education and especially television broadcast-based distance education in South Africa.

The next part of the study assesses the role of television broadcast-based distance education and its effectiveness in teaching and learning; a brief history of South

African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC's) educational services with more emphasis on educational television; and the history, production and distribution of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

CHAPTER TWO

PART TWO

2.2.1. Introduction

Most of the data presented in this part of the study was gathered during a two week period (3-14 July 2000) the researcher spent at Liberty Learning Channel as a participant observer, from documents collected at Liberty Learning Channel, and from interviews with the partners in the production of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* and the presenters of the programme (see chapter one, part two, section 1.2. for details on the methodology).

2.2.2. The role of mass media in distance education and television broadcast-based distance education effectiveness in teaching and learning

Educational broadcasting continues to play a significant role within Third World nations because radio, television and associated cassette technologies offer planners hope, and in some cases, proven means for increasing access to education and for upgrading the quality of instruction (Mayo, 1989). Confronted by enrolment bottlenecks, high drop-out rates, antiquated curricula, poorly qualified classroom teachers, insufficient and unevenly distributed learning materials and limited financial resources with which to expand or improve existing educational opportunities, it is easy to understand why politicians and planners world-wide have been attracted by the symbolism and perceived power of the mass media (Mayo, 1989).

There are four educational uses of radio and television which have been successfully undertaken in many places throughout the world (Dieuzeide, 1962 quoted in Schramm, 1964: 166). These are: the enrichment-broadcast, which is integrated into classroom teaching and makes a qualitative improvement in the teaching; the broadcast designed to palliate the deficiencies of an existing educational system, for example, substituting for unqualified teaching staff or upgrading present teachers and thus making a largely quantitative improvement in the system; the extension broadcast, which extends and prolongs educational opportunities for individuals in their homes or groups of individuals formed for educational purposes, the individual in this case having already had some schooling; and the development broadcast, designed to carry education to communities where there has never been a school. In

this case radio and television conduct a mass educational activity which really precedes the school.

The mass media can meet the challenge of the growing numbers of people to be educated, since they can transmit the same messages millions of times. The problem arising from the number of subjects to be taught are offset by the opportunity of consulting the best specialists in every field, those abreast of knowledge or constantly updating data banks, and by the ability to store, catalogue and distribute audio-visual products designed for teachers and their pupils (Aniebona, 1990: 112). Even the problem of economic disparities seems soluble; while techniques such as radio and television for schools are costly, the size of audience reached results in a very low cost per pupil (Souchon, 1984: 391). With broadcasts, as with print, one teacher's words can reach a much larger audience than would ever be possible face-to-face, so that economies of scale are possible (Perraton, 1981).

Through mass media, many people who may be characterised by a great diversity of cultural, linguistic and social groupings now receive the same news, entertainment and information about their environment. In Marshall McLuhan's (1964) view, television promotes the increased participation of people, both viewing and working with television across the boundaries of class, age, culture and nation (Mersham, 1998: 231). For example, one may argue that, in the past in South Africa, the mass media heightened the debate about apartheid. As the period of transition gathered momentum, television played its part as a platform for South Africans to define and debate the nature of their new democratic society. In 1990s it could again be argued that the SABC television was used by the present government to build support and facilitate the efforts of its nation building programmes (Mersham, 1998: 231). Likewise television could be used to bridge the great diversity of educational imbalances in South Africa.

Television has also been described as the most popular art and is part of our daily life (Newcomb, 1974). As such, it is a source of much of our historical knowledge, information and ideas about the world that we live in. In this sense, television maybe thought of as one of the most wide-reaching and powerful forms of popular, informal education (Mersham, 1989: 21). From this point of view, it may be reasonably

suggested that television provides and shapes much of what might be termed our 'stock of historical knowledge'. As a medium of communication in a democratic society, the main functions of television may be identified as the following: information; socialisation; education; and entertainment. Information, consists the collection and dissemination of news, facts, messages, opinions and comments required in order to understand and react knowledgeably to personal, environmental, national and international conditions as well as to be in a position to take appropriate decisions.

Television is used for socialisation especially among the youth. Television plays a role in broadening the sense of group identity and establishing the reference norms and the standards of the social group with which the person identifies with. This is especially significant for young people when a consistent political orientation in attitudes to a reference group is being established (Wiebe, 1971). Through television, a common fund of knowledge is provided which enables people to behave as responsible members of the society. Through television, people can be motivated to promote the immediate and ultimate aims of the society as well as stimulating personal choices and aspirations (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 1997). Television provides a forum for debate and discussion during which facts needed to facilitate agreement or clarity of differing view points on public issues are articulated and exchanged; the transmission of knowledge so as to foster intellectual development, the formation of character and the acquisition of skills through education is very familiar ground to television. Television promotes culture through the dissemination of cultural and artistic products with a view to widening the viewer's horizons by awakening his/her imagination and stimulating his/her aesthetic needs and creativity.

In the area of entertainment, television perhaps commands a much firmer ground than all other media. This it does admirably well by the diffusion through sounds and images, of drama, dance, art, literature, music, comedy, sports, games etc. for personal and collective recreation and enjoyment, and television is a powerful force for integration which it does by providing for citizens of a country access to the variety of messages which they need in order to know and understand each other. This

brings about better appreciation of each other's living conditions, viewpoints and aspirations (Ebo, 1990: 134).

Mass media have proved themselves under many different conditions in and out of schools. They have proved their ability to supplement and enrich school work. Where teachers and schools are scarce, they have proved able to carry a very large part of the instructional task themselves. They have proved to be of great help in adult education and literacy training. For example, studies from developing countries indicate that television is an effective medium for adult education. In 1970s, in the Ivory Coast, it was necessary to teach 98, 000 workers to read, write and figure, so that they could be promoted to middle level supervisory positions. As few qualified teachers were available the best ones were put on television and the workers were gathered together an hour a day in groups supervised by a monitor from industry. The experiment was very successful, and 55 per cent of the workers learned enough to be promoted (Cassier, 1962; Schramm, 1964: 171; Kaye, 1976; Ural, 1991: 13; Chunjie and Yuxia, 1994). Also, mass media has been very helpful in training for industry and technical services, and for the in-service training of teachers (Schramm, 1964: 140). The national broadcast-based distance education systems have confirmed their effectiveness for the training of teachers over and over again, both by means of formal courses directed at teachers, and by providing examples of excellent-teaching (Chale, 1983; Mahlck and Temu, 1989; Ural, 1991; Perraton, 1992). Educational broadcasting is unparalleled among media in its ability to share excellent teaching and training and thus to equalise, the opportunity for effective learning for the whole population.

A few notable examples of television use for teacher education in developing countries are the following: China has been a major user of television for over 30 years. It established a Television University System (TVU) in the 1960s to train science teachers and other professionals (Chunjie and Yuxia, 1994). Closed during the cultural revolution, it reopened in 1979. A World Bank higher education loan approved in the early 1980s, assisted both the Central Radio and Television University and 28 principal television universities to train staff and science teachers, construct and equip transmission stations, production centres, laboratory and printing facilities, study centres and classrooms. Government also launched an educational television channel and in-service teacher training program to broadcast instructional

packages from Beijing to other parts of the country via satellite (Chunjie and Yuxia, 1994); Thailand's Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University's School of Education (STOU) has been offering in-service programs for the professional upgrading of teachers. They consist of 4-year and 2- year degree programmes and one-year teaching certificates. Students study mainly at home from distance learning packages mailed to them and from radio and television broadcasts; Brazil's two programmes: Salto Para O Futuro launched in 1992 and by 1995 was reaching 245, 000 teachers in 27 states, and TV-Escola, launched in 1995, are uses television broadcasting extensively for teacher education and are generally considered popular among teachers (Perraton, and Potashnik, 1997).

In response to the growing demand for increasingly higher levels of universal education, many countries are searching for cost-effective strategies for increasing access to and improving the quality of secondary school in rural areas. For 35 years, Mexico has addressed rural education demands through a unique and successful television-based educational programme called Telesecundaria (Bordon, 2003). Initially using terrestrial microwave and now broadcast satellite, this comprehensive programme provides a complete package of support to teachers and students in remote rural areas. Particularly notable is the fact that the programme has been sustained over 35 -year's period, expanding and improving, despite numerous changes in government and administrations. Another distinguishing feature of Telesecundaria is that it is a complete and integrated approach to delivering education at a distance. It is a comprehensive instructional model that enables schools to deliver a complete junior secondary curriculum at costs comparable to those provided in more populated, urban areas. The Telesecundaria model offers policymakers in other countries a cost-effective, viable solution to increasing rural access to quality secondary education (Calderoni, 2000; Perraton, 2000: 35).

Another finding of studies from developing countries indicates that television has considerable power to motivate students, whether they are school children or adults. In Zambia, researchers reported that literacy classes taught by television had better attendance records than those not using television (Ewart, 1988 quoted in Ural, 1991). This factor also affected the dropout rate. Since the success of any adult education course depends on the number of learners who remain in the course, the researchers in

Zambia were gratified to discover that the dropout rate for these programmes using television was much lower than for the programmes not using television.

However, too many teachers and parents have had and continue to have, misconceptions about the effects of television (Kavanagh, 1997: 3 quoted in ABC Educational Television¹). These misconceptions are driven by the belief that “television is the root of most, if not all, evil among the young. It destroys that imagination, provokes delinquency and violence, undermines family life, and is the primary source of sexism, racism, consumerism and any other obnoxious ideology one might care to name” (Buckingham, 1993: viii quoted in ABC Educational Television²; Pretorius, 2000). Less publicised than hypotheses about the negative effects of television on cognitive development, scholastic achievement, and social behaviour are research investigations into the positive effects of television viewing on factors such as interest, creativity and imagination (Leonard, 1997). Howard Gardner (1982, 1991, 1993), a developmental psychologist at Harvard University, is a proponent of the idea that certain kinds of television stimulate creativity and imagination in young children. However, the research results supporting these types of positive hypotheses are modest at best (Seels *et al.*, 1996).

Examples of television shows that have been subjected to more educational research than any other in the USA are *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* (Collins and Kimmel, 1996) and *Sesame Street* (Lovelace, 1990; Mielke, 1990), both shown on public television stations. *Sesame Street*, distributed in more than 90 countries, has also been studied internationally (Gettas, 1990; Shebloski, 2001; HSRC, 2003). The goals of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* are primarily affective, and research has demonstrated positive effects on the self-esteem of children and their tendencies to value others (Seels *et al.*, 1996). With emphasis on both socialisation and cognitive development, *Sesame Street* has been shown to have positive outcomes in terms of school readiness as well as math, reading, and social skills (Seels *et al.*, 1996; Reeves, 1998).

¹ ABC Educational Television. <http://www.wed.sturt.flinders.edu.au/dlt> Date accessed 7/6/2002.

² ABC Educational Television. <http://www.wed.sturt.flinders.edu.au/dlt/1999/play/images/start.htm> date accessed 7/6/2002.

A large-scale survey of teachers in USA conducted in 1991 by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting indicated that “instructional television is a firmly established teaching tool that is positively regarded by classroom teachers and increasingly well-supported with equipment and programming” (Seels *et al.*, 1996: 356). According to Ural (1991:11), people learn from systematic teaching, and incidentally from television through simple observation of behaviour. Writing in the Encyclopaedia of Educational Research, Dorr (1992: 1398) concluded: “there is no doubt that television is an effective means of achieving traditional educational goals” (see Nwosu, 1990: 44).

Findings concerning the impact of television in education can be summed up as: there is no conclusive evidence that television stultifies the mind; there is no consistent evidence that television increases either hyperactivity in children; and there is insufficient evidence that television viewing displaces academic activities such as reading or homework and thereby has a negative impact on school achievement (Reeves, 1998). Forty years of research shows positive effects on learning from television programmes that are explicitly produced and used for instructional purposes (Dorr, 1992; Seels *et al.*, 1996); and most studies show that there is no significant difference between the grades of students sitting in the conventional classroom and those of off-campus students viewing televised extensions of that classroom (Russell, 1993; Seels *et al.*, 1996). Numerous reviews evaluating telecourses suggest that those that are well-designed and well-organised are as effective as conventional face-to-face courses in their impact on student learning and on student and faculty satisfaction (Whittington, 1986; Blanchard, 1989; McNabb, 1994; Dubanoski *et al.*, 1999).

In the Ivory Coast, researchers found that children in the community with television came to the first grade at the age of six, with vocabularies that averaged a year higher than children in the communities without television. In Samoa, a comparison was made between public school children who had instruction by television and those who had not had it by using the results of the school entrance examination. It was found that those children who had been taught by television performed considerably better than those students who had not. In Colombia, children who were taught in part by television were tested against a comparable group taught from the same syllabus, but without the use of television. Results indicated that the children who had been taught

with the aid of television achieved better than those who were taught by means of traditional institution (Ural, 1991:11). Recent studies suggest that another predictor of telecourse effectiveness is individual student motivation and personality traits (Biner and Dean, 1997; Witherspoon, 1997). Mayo's (1990) general conclusion about the overall effectiveness of media in distance education is that "their effectiveness rests with how well they are designed, deployed and ultimately used within specific contexts (Also see Schramm, 1977; Rumble, 1986; Riel, 1990: 35; Botha, 1993: 23).

Television has been effective because it offers maximum impact; engaging the eyes and ears with sight, sound and motion (Lange, 1987). Because of the richness of its 'symbol systems' (sound, text, pictures, movement, colour), television can help 'cognitive processing' in three ways: through illustrations, television can offer powerful audio-visual images that symbolises key concepts and ideas, and that will help students understand and remember them (Salomon, 1979). Through modelling, television can provide, in Bates (1987) and Aniebona (1990: 112) terms, 'concrete physical examples from the real world to represent abstract ideas'. Through supplantation, which Salomon (1983) describes as follows:

This is perhaps the most important, yet least self-evident function of TV's pictorial representation...when complex new ideas, constructs and processes are verbally introduced, students neither have appropriate corresponding images nor can they generate them their own. TV can accomplish the critical function of explicitly providing the students with appropriate images as substitutes for the ones they would benefit from but could not generate on their own.

What is important, is that television can not only provide audio-visual material to which students would otherwise have access, but can also illustrate and represent complex ideas and concepts, using real life examples and techniques such as animation, which will help the student understand and apply them (Bates, 1987). Students see televised instruction as familiar, comfortable and pleasant, as they have grown up with television, using it constantly as both a source of entertainment and information (Lange, 1987).

In spite of the scientifically documented effectiveness studies of television broadcast-based distance education, the medium is not used to its full potential (Ural 1991). The reasons as analysed by Bates (1986) are that most distance teaching institutions go

through a separate broadcasting organisation for production as well as transmission. This procedure ended up being rather costly since overheads of the other institution were also added to the broadcasting costs. Also, the use of television seems to require large initial investments (Anzalone, 1987: 39; Mayo, 1990; Klees, 1995: 399-400; Council of Minister of Education Canada, 1997; Butcher, 1998). However the costs of educational television are highly dependent on the number of students served (Ural, 1991: 25). For instance, the use of television in classrooms in developing countries has generally proved to be an expensive addition to educational budgets. Countries were not usually equipped for the organisational requirements to produce, distribute and support what was often a new curriculum delivered through television (Butcher, 1998). According to Bates (1986), no doubt greater efficiency can produce lower costs and many people would claim cost-benefits from the procedure of outsourcing programmes that has become prevalent for example at the BBC. The simple strategic answer is to point out that digital technology will bring about major cost-savings in the production of television in the near future. These savings have already been seen in the peripheral aspects of TV production-captions, animations and so on, but as editing becomes more digitised, equipment costs will reduce rapidly. Additionally, there are other programme formats, popular with viewers, that could be adapted for education at far lower cost, for example, chat shows (Bates, 1986).

Technical staff, is in short supply in most of the developing countries. Appropriate facilities for training are inadequate (Jensen, 2002). Only few developing countries offer training schemes. Countries receiving foreign aid to install information and communication technologies, up-to-date educational broadcasting studios and transmitters find themselves without key technical staff to operate the new systems (Jensen, 2002; Hawkins³). Nationals of developing countries returning home after intensive courses using the relatively lavish facilities of say, France, Japan, the United Kingdom or the United States, do not easily settle down to being operators of small systems without proper technical support, in countries where it may take years to obtain spaces. They rapidly become disillusioned and leave, perhaps to seek employment in the country where they were trained; or in the non-educational sector of broadcasting in their own country (Jensen, 2002). Thus, the supply and training of

³ The World Bank Institute <http://www.worldbank.org/> date accessed 10/2/2004

technical staff is often a very real constraint in organising and managing educational radio and television (Ural, 1991: 42; Butcher, 1998).

Educational television cannot be expanded because there is insufficient additional channel capacity (Bates, 1984). For example, in several developing countries, being able to receive clear broadcast signals (terrain and sheer distance are limiting), having access to electricity, and keeping sets operational posed enormous difficulties, especially in rural areas (Bates, 1986). However, nowadays spectrum scarcity is no longer as much of a problem with digital television, particularly when teamed with satellite delivery. This will allow many more channels to be available on terrestrial over-the-air channels, satellite and cable than there are now, since several digital channels can be squeezed into the space previously occupied by an analogue channel. This revolution is planned to be introduced into several countries, although all the above technologies are extremely cost-intensive. Their adoption will depend on geography, as well as on financial factors.

Lack of political support and government policies on educational broadcasting is another factor why television broadcast-based distance education is underutilised (Hawkins⁴; Daly⁵). There is convincing evidence that political support and government policies on education broadcasting are crucial in long-term sustainability and growth to scale⁶. The political will to make resources available is the main factor determining effectiveness and sustainability in adult and non-formal programmes using open learning media (Dodds and Edirisingha, 2000:104).

Cultural factors also impacts on educational broadcasting. There are two sets of cultural factors: the influence of elites' and of foreign culture. In most countries, the

⁴ The World Bank Institute <http://www.worldbank.org/> date accessed 10/2/2004.

⁵ <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/library/jdaly/dalypaper1.html> date accessed 10/2/2004.

⁶ For example, many of the Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) projects have failed because they were unable to attract political support to ensure national funding and integration into national education structures, as they tried to pass from USAID- funded and expatriate-managed projects into national programmes. The South African Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) project, which was nationalised in its leadership much earlier in its life and has been able to diversify its funding base, may hopefully prove to be one of the few exceptions. The Acción Cultural Popular (ACPO) radiophonic schools programme in Colombia, after a sustained period of dramatic success, with both church and governmental support, died after forty years, when the church and the politicians turned against it (Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada, 1998). Two programmes which seem to continue to command political support and to have survived and grown to scale are the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE)

influence of elites is so strong that 'communication effects gap' is probably widening. This gap is between elites and the remainder of the population. Elites employ communications, including educational broadcasting, to their own advantage more than to the advantage of others, with the result that they enhance their own position (Roger, 1974). Educational television, in particular and to a lesser extent educational radio, may introduce new cultural influences that come into sharp conflict with the old (Bates, 1986). For example, the Ivory Coast project, there were cultural conflicts as classroom teachers' authority was challenged by that of the broadcasts, prepared by teachers who were better qualified and reputedly, more able to teach. In the Ivory Coast, there was also conflict between a national language, French, which was both medium of instruction and vehicle of a foreign culture, and local languages, of which there are many (Bates, 1986).

Rigidly imposed broadcast schedules pose difficulties for the use of the programmes in the classrooms (Bates, 1986). Air-time, particularly peak hours, has become scarcer, under pressure from professional broadcasters to remove educational programmes to times that are inconvenient for students; leaving peak times free for general broadcasting. Educational broadcasting cannot be effective if it has extremely limited access to wavebands and /or airtime (Bates, 1984; Souchon, 1984; Mayo, 1989). Of note is that the wide-spread availability of cassette recorders (VCRs) has provided teachers with the ease-of-use and flexibility they require as programmes can be recorded off-air for later use (Mielke, 1990; Reeves, 1998).

Educational television is also said to be a linear medium and therefore unsuitable for education (that is, it follows scene to scene). However, many other media that people enjoy and get benefit from are also linear. A detective novel is linear, one clue at a time. In fact it would spoil the value of a detective novel to read it in a non-linear way. So one can't regard linearity as such as being bad (Bates, 1984). On the other hand, only television can be recorded, and once it is recorded, it can be accessed non-linearly, one can go more or less directly to any scene.

programme in Thailand and the Indian National Open School (NOS). Both have had firm national political support from their inception.

A critique leveled against educational television is that it is not interactive and therefore is seen as unsuitable for education (Bacsich, 1996). By an interactive medium is one that accepts feedback from users and adapts its behaviour accordingly. It is true that educational television, even when recorded, is not interactive, not as programmes are currently made, anyway. One technique for adding interactivity to such programmes is by using the basic format of phone-in programmes, now a standard format in television and in radio. This technique is widely used by Liberty Learning Channel, as will be explicated in later chapters. Through the basic feedback channel of telephone you can add other feedback channels such as facsimile or electronic mail (Bates, 1984; Souchon, 1984; Lange, 1987). Audience participation can also be achieved by such means as panel discussions, role-playing, case studies and interviews (Moore, 1981).

Further, findings suggest that television is not used widely in classrooms because teachers experience difficulties in previewing videos, obtaining equipment, incorporating programmes into the curriculum, and linking television programming to assessment activities (Reeves, 1998). School cultures or social systems are a powerful influence on the adoption and integration of technology in the classroom (Polin, 1992). There is strong evidence that television is used most effectively when it is intentionally designed for education and when teachers are involved in its selection, and integration into the curriculum (Johnson, 1987). The teacher plays the major role in deciding what happens in the classroom, and as long as teachers experience difficulty in previewing videos, obtaining equipment, incorporating programmes into the curriculum, and linking television programs to assessment activities, television will continue to be relatively rare in classrooms. If we hope to see technology not only adopted but integrated into classrooms, as with other attempts to improve the educational system, we need to know the teacher's perspectives (Cortazzi, 1993). One way to learn what teachers think, perceive, and believe is to give voice to their experiences. This is the purpose of nonfictional educational story (Barone, 1992).

The researcher supports Bates (1984) argument that he does not regard any of these inhibitors as being particularly convincing. This is because solutions to these problems are available (as indicated in some of the cases above) or can be sought if the commitment to use television broadcast-distance education is there. Therefore in

South Africa, where the vast majority of the populations is burdened with dire economic difficulties and resources that are inadequate for providing even minimal social services; and finances are an unavoidable problem limiting reforms in education; with the illiteracy rate of 15 per cent and 14 per cent for Adult⁷ females and males respectively (Population Reference Bureau Data Finder, 2000; UNFPA State of World Population, 2003); the educational challenges to be met are enormous. Instruction still conforms to a mechanical routine, dominated by verbatimism which is therefore dull and uninspiring (Prinsloo, 1999; Kwape, 2000; Hawkins⁸). Moreover, according to a 2001 teacher audit, there are 58, 000 under-qualified teachers in the education system (Harper, 2004; Mabuza, 2004). The curriculum revision has lagged, and teaching materials are scarce (Fiske and Ladd, 2004)

To equalise and upgrade education and training, it is necessary to upgrade all the teachers and the teaching materials, and probably to review and revise curricular throughout the school system (Ural, 1991). Television broadcast-based distance education is a viable alternative to expand educational provision extensively and quickly (Ural, 1991). Television broadcast-based distance education can provide: wide availability of established subject matter experts, procedures and commitment to mastery approaches and enhance opportunity for interdisciplinary course development; provide education and training for very large numbers of people more rapidly than the traditional methods; avoid the need for under-utilised large campuses while expanding the capacity of the existing institutions through technology to serve more learners; accelerate rural development and thereby reduce the flow of people from rural to urban areas; improve the accessibility of education and training by making it available to wide range of populations; exploit the optimum potential of disadvantaged learners and ensure consistently uniform quality of education by incorporating scientific instructional / training design principles to enable all learners to reach the intended outcomes of programme; make provision for greater variety of classes at the work environment therefore less time away from work while enhancing

⁷ Illiteracy rate for adult females and males means rates for women and men above 15 years of age who cannot, with understanding, both read and write a short statement on everyday life. Data is derived from estimates for the 1998-2001 periods (UNFPA State of World Population, 2003; Population Reference Bureau Data Finder, 2000).

⁸ The World Bank Institute <http://www.worldbank.org> date accessed 10/2/2004.

the possibilities of greater transfer from the learning situation to the work environment; and to increase the efficiency of educational and training programmes by reducing the learning time and cost (Ural, 1991: 27-28).

2.2.3. The possibility of television broadcast-based distance education in South Africa

In light of the above, the desirability to utilise broadcast-based distance education in South Africa is evident. The commitment to use broadcast-based distance education is evident, as the National Education Committee declared 1991 the year of mass education. Similarly, the African National congress (ANC) has been committed to qualitative mass education based on technology, as highlighted in a report by International Development Corporation (ICD) investigating the feasibility of satellite services for South Africa which addressed the financial, commercial and technical implications of providing television broadcasting (Ural, 1991⁹). The Human Science Research Council had two relevant research programmes that provided an overview of the field; distance teaching in education and training in the Republic of South Africa, in 1987; and the uses of Radio and television in education and training, in 1984 (Ural, 1991).

The South African Department of Education released its *Educational Broadcasting Plan* in March 1996. The document was a proposal for a partnership between the Department of Education and the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). The document stated that although educational broadcasting is not intended to replace educators, it can be used effectively by learners and educators across all sectors thereby augmenting the provision of education and training. The broad needs for educational broadcasting were identified and with regard to distance education in particular, projects that could be developed included; upgrading teaching skills and knowledge of different subjects; equipping teachers to understand and teach new

⁹ This source material (Ural, 1991), which is 13 years old is used extensively because it is the only study on the role of broadcast-based distance education in South Africa the researcher could find.

areas of the curriculum and providing them with some learning resources to use in the classroom (priority subject areas would need to be identified); and a basic introductory course to education and to theories of teaching and learning (Department of Education, 1996). The plan proposed interim strategies for 1996-1997 and areas for further investigation and development beyond this period.

Having shown the role broadcast-based distance education (particularly television) can play in South Africa, and the country's commitment to utilise this media, it is imperative to look at the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) educational services. Therefore, the next section of the study will be devoted to the above theme.

2.2.4. South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC's) educational broadcasting services with more emphasis on educational television

The history of educational broadcasting in South Africa goes back to the 1960s, when there was a movement by the regime of the time to stratify all race groups in South Africa. Both established African language radio stations and television (which was established in 1976) contributed to the inhumane system of separate development of the South African society. Radio began playing this role when a School Radio Service was established. White staff produced the programmes, yet the service focused on languages, including African languages and literature. Although the School Radio Service was successful, there was some resistance to the service by people within and outside the SABC. The service continued despite the resistance movement of 1976, which saw the youth resisting the plan for subjects to be taught through the medium of Afrikaans. Afrikaans was part of the package of programmes of the School Radio Service (Kwape, 2000).

Just before the 1976 upheavals¹⁰, television was introduced in South Africa and because of its appeal and visual effects, audience migration from radio to television

¹⁰ On 16th June 1976, high school students in Soweto (the name given in 1963 to the collection of townships to the Southwest of Johannesburg) started protesting for better education and police responded with teargas and live bullets. The day is commemorated today by a South African national holiday, Youth Day, which honors all the young people who lost their lives in the struggle against apartheid and Bantu education (an education which taught blacks that they were not equal to Whites and equipped them with skills to serve their own people in homelands or to work in labouring jobs under Whites (Boddy-Evans, 2004).

started (Kwape, 2000). However, to this day, majority of people still rely on radio for information and education (Maroge¹¹; Vermeulen, 2001; Jensen, 2002; SABC¹²). Historically, neither television nor radio responded to public interest. Under apartheid, the education system and the broadcaster both contributed to the underdevelopment of the people by reducing learning to the narrow, one-way transmission of information (Prinsloo, 1999). The educational programming broadcast by the SABC epitomised this didactic and disempowering approach, and was shunned by audiences as well as by some staff members of the broadcaster (Kwape, 2000).

In essence, before 1994, both television and radio responded to the needs of the social order of the time (Tomaselli *et al.*, 1989; Ministry for Posts, Telecommunications and Broadcasting, 1997; Barnett, 1999). Thus, the Department of Education at that time was an extension of the prevailing social system and the SABC had to uphold that system with the result that both were not in a position to provide a meaningful educational broadcasting service (Kwape, 2000; SABC Education, 2004).

In post-1995, the government wanted to provide meaningful education to the nation and this move culminated in the establishment of a broadcast support to help to achieve the goals of outcome-based education, strive for life-long learning development and provide facilities for distance education in South Africa. The result is the partnership of the public broadcaster, the SABC, with the Department of Education (Kwape, 2000). The Department of Education spearheaded a process to implement the recommendations made in the Independent Broadcasting Authority's (IBA's) Triple Inquiry Report of 1995. These recommendations included: educational broadcasting should value the roles played by formal and informal learning in South Africa; educational broadcasting should be regulated and managed in such a manner that it supports the efforts of the public in its endeavors to promote lifelong learning; educational broadcasting should not neglect the focus on children's programmes; educational broadcasting should forge partnerships in order to meet the educational needs of the public; appropriate equipment should be made available to learning sites

¹¹ <http://www.compcom.co.za/policyresearch/policyDocs/Broadcasting%20doc%20for%20website.doc> date accessed 7/3/2004

¹² <http://www.sabc.co.za/home.asp> date accessed 7/3/2004

and centres so that educational broadcasting can be accessible; the capacity to produce and deliver high-quality educational programmes should be developed as a matter of urgency, and players involved in this field should start aligning their systems to cater for the development of educator's skills; the establishment of an educational channel/station should be explored to play a crucial role in the provision of the learning resources and distance education. This resulted in a business plan, Educational Broadcasting Plan July 1996-December 1997 (Department of Education, 1996b; Galombik and Lektorotsoana, 1996), which was signed and ratified by both the SABC and Department of Education. It can be reported that these recommendations have become the framework that has guided the department of education, SABC education and the legislative process in educational broadcasting and policy frameworks that impact on education, broadcasting and technology-enhanced learning (Kwape, 2000).

The plan mapped out the framework of a partnership that had been forged between the Department of Education and the South African Broadcasting Corporation to develop educational radio and television, with print and outreach to support education and human resource development. The objectives and focus areas of the plan were to enhance the systemic development of South Africa's education and training system. The objectives of the plan were to: support the quest for lifelong learning; make educational opportunity available and accessible to all; improve the quality of education; link education more closely to the life experiences of South Africans and to the socio-economic development of the country; and develop South Africa's human resource (Galombik and Lektorotsoana, 1996; Kwape, 2000; SABC Education¹³).

The new educational television and radio service launched on air on 27 February 1997 (SABC Education¹⁴), has increased its programme output from approximately ten hours per week to twenty hours per week, across SABC's three channels. Educational television programming averages about 90, 000 minutes a year (SABC Education, 2003). Public radio stations have also produced and broadcast educational

¹³ SABC Education <http://www.sabc.co.za/education.htm> date accessed 17/3/2004.

¹⁴ SABC Education <http://www.sabc.co.za/education.htm> date accessed 17/3/2004.

programmes that support educational delivery in South Africa. SABC radio broadcasts more than 150, 000 minutes of educational programming a year in eleven languages across the corporation's radio services. Perhaps radio's biggest advantage is that there is a station for each of the eleven official languages (SABC Education, 2003). Educational programmes are made in all these languages, not merely through translation, but through adaptation to suit the culture and idiom of each language (SABC Education¹⁵).

So far, the service has developed a library of educational programmes to support: early childhood development; curriculum support; youth development; adult education and training; and human resource development programmes (specifically for teachers, farmers and managers) (Galombik and Lekorotsoana, 1996; Kwape, 2000; SABC Education, 2004). Television programmes aimed at children are provided in at least seven South African languages, while programmes for youth and adults are either in English or are multi-lingual. The library of material that exists on audio and videotapes covers the whole area of school development. The centre for educational technology distributes some of the programmes to schools on request. Schools can buy programmes for further use in classroom from the SABC sales department. The use of some of the material in schools is taking place. This is made possible by the launch of an initiative called School Access Project by the SABC and the Department of Education (Pretorius, 2000). The project attempts to ensure that selected schools acquire the receiving equipment and outreach in order to enable use of the educational programmes. In 2000, this initiative had already provided 90 schools with television sets, video equipment and supported training for teachers (Pretorius, 2000).

One cannot state that all schools use the media in their teaching and learning discourse, as most schools in South Africa lack the essential resources (Galombik and Lekorotsoana, 1996; SABC Education, 2004). Statistics show that in 2002, only 43 percent of schools in South Africa had television sets (Sowaga, 2002). However, one can state that awareness levels have been raised, both by the broadcaster and the

¹⁵ SABC Education <http://www.sabc.co.za/education.htm> date accessed 17/3/2004.

Department of Education, such that it prompts schools to start using television in their teaching (Kwape, 2000).

2.2.4.1. SABC Education funding

The SABC Education Department is under-resourced (Sowaga, 2002). The department relies mostly on government grants for the production of programmes. The future of government funding is uncertain, especially in light of the huge demands made on the state funds for many other educational areas such as poor resources and insufficient teachers in schools. Other sources of funding are through: corporate social responsibility funds, donors, co-production ventures and video sales (SABC Education, 2004). Advertising support on educational broadcasting has been poor as advertisers generally tend to put their money into programmes that attract bigger audiences. However, Dame Swart, the departmental marketing and sales manager, is of the opinion that marketers by sponsoring SABC Education can benefit from multi-media brand exposure to school going children, parents and teachers (Sowaga, 2002). Therefore, there is need for sustainable revenue rather than on the current reliance on government grants and the role of the private sector is very crucial in attaining the sustainability of the SABC educational broadcasting.

2.2.4.2. The nature of SABC educational programming

In a interview with the then-manager of SABC educational television (Nicola Galombik), it was brought to the researcher's attention that SABC educational programming was geared towards redressing the imbalances of the past and thus most programmes were targeted to the upliftment of the poor, of which majority are black (Nicola Galombik, personal interview, 11 August 1999, Appendix E). Galombik maintained that SABC Education was devoted in producing programmes which reflected the real life situations of its audiences (personal interview, 11 August 1999, Appendix E). In illustrating this point, Nicola Golambik gave the example of *Education Express*¹⁶.

¹⁶ *Education Express* is a weekly Television magazine programme for educators, providing educators with good-quality professional support and guidance (SABC Education <http://www.sabc.co.za/education.htm> date accessed 17/3/2004).

Now, that is a good example of what I was saying by reflecting [...] culture, region and when we make a programme for teachers, we don't go to a university and film a lecturer lecturing teachers. What we do is film teachers who are doing good work [...] it is teachers who show teachers how to do things. [...] So that you are affirming and building morale at the same time as teaching (Nicola Golambik, personal interview, 11 August 1999, Appendix E).

2.2.4.3. Some of the SABC's educational television initiatives

South Africans educational broadcasting offerings will be discussed under two headings: non-formal education and formal education.

2.2.4.3.1. Non-Formal education

Nicola Galombik, the then-manager of the SABC educational television believed that the SABC was very successful in non-formal educational programming (personal interview, 11 August, 1999). She explained that the SABC "did more on non-formal education, general public education. I think we are strong in that area" (Nicola Galombik, personal interview, 11 August 1999).

2.2.4.3.2. Childhood development

One of the SABC's educational television initiatives geared towards providing structured support to the formal system is the School Television service¹⁹, which is broadcast daily on the largest channel (SABC 2) and has been designed to provide learning resources for use by pupils and educators in classrooms (SABC 1999-2000 Annual Report²⁰). The service focuses on the foundation Phase (Grades 0-3, an example of a programme in this category is *Takalane Saseme*) and expanded to incorporate the Intermediate Phase (Grade 4-6) in 2001. Some of the intermediate phase programmes are *What's the Story?* An English game show series aimed at 9 to 12 year olds, that intends to encourage and develop a culture of reading and writing. *What's The Story?* is an energetic and joyous approach to literacy and storytelling. Part game show and part magazine programme (Department of Communications, 1997). *Dlala Waya Way.com* is a pre-teen (intermediate phase) sports magazine series

¹⁹ *School Television* is aimed at teachers and pupils in the Foundation Phase (grade 0 to Grade 3) and it was expanded in 2001 to include Intermediate Phase (grade 4-6). (http://sabc.co.za/annual_report/contents.htm) date accessed 9/3/2004.

²⁰ http://sabc.co.za/annual_report/contents.htm date accessed 9/3/2004.

in English. Sport has been identified as one of the human and social activities with an immeasurable potential for unifying people of different socio-economic and political backgrounds. This series explores the concept of sports development within the context of cross-cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. The programme aims to promote healthy and balanced lifestyles as well as develop love and interest for sport amongst young children (Department of Communications, 1997).

The television service is supported by free printed materials (including teachers' guides, activities, posters and story books), which are sent to all primary schools in the country twice a year, and are also available on the Internet (SABC Education, 2004). The service is complemented by a strategy to increase access to receiving equipment in schools and to train educators to use school TV resources. Part of the strategy is to facilitate private sector companies to provide television equipment to schools. Through this facilitation process, the department of education and the SABC has partnered with organisations such as Eskom (South African electricity provider) that have donated televisions and video recorders to schools (Kwape, 2000; Pretorius, 2000; SABC, 2000).

2.2.4.3.3. Human resource development

SABC Educational TV has a successful weekly magazine programme for educators, *Education Express*, which supports the professional development of educators and is a platform for discussing educational issues (SABC Education, 2004). The programme is supported by printed resource materials carried in newspapers and on the SABC Educational TV web site. This programme has won the prestigious Japan Prize in the category of human resource development. The support services using the Internet have some limitations, because its reach is limited to those with access to the Internet. It is important to note that the number of schools that are being connected to the Internet is increasing yearly. This increase stems from the intervention of organisations such as SchoolNet South Africa, which has been established to focus on school connectivity to the Internet (SchoolNet South Africa, 1999).

2.2.4.3.4. Youth development

In the youth category, SABC Education's successful educational youth magazine, *Take 5*²¹, which is broadcast four times a week in the afternoon, provides teenagers and young adults with life skills and vocational orientation, and encourages a culture of learning among South Africa's youth (Pretorius, 2000; SABC, 2003). The live interactive television programme is supported by web-based services, which provide youth with further information, advice and support. In many respects, young people call in and are given advice on how to deal with issues of sexuality, HIV/AIDS and unemployment. The educational drama series called *Yizo Yizo*²² captured up to 2.1 million viewers (SABC, 1999). The audience included teachers, youth and parents. This was the first educational programme to be ranked number one in the thirteen week of transmission (Maslamoney, 2002). The model that was used in programme development is one that attempts to ensure that the programme was educational, relevant, authentic, is driven by audience needs (Smith, 2001) and, in many instances, supported by marketing and research (Kwape, 2000). The programme won the 2001 UNICEF Japan Prize for "issues in education" as well as "best international TV series" at Cinema Tout Ecran in Geneva (Sinyangwe, 2002).

2.2.4.3.5. Public education

Television programming in this category covered health, human rights and civic education (SABC Education 1999-2000 Annual Report²³). Examples of some programmes produced in this category are *Khululeka*²⁴, *Buphelo the health files*²⁵, *Walala Wasala*²⁶ and *Soul Buddyz*²⁷.

²¹ *Take 5* is a youth magazine programme presented by the youth.

²² *Yizo Yizo* is a street slang for "this is it". The series was designed to address the huge challenges which young people face that render many South African schools dysfunctional (SABC, 1999)

²³ SABC Education 1999-2000 Annual Report http://sabc.co.za/annual_report/contents.htm date accessed 9/3/2004.

²⁴ *Khululeka* is a comedy drama on voter education.

²⁵ *Buphelo the health file* a programme dealing with health issues.

²⁶ *Walala Wasala* is a youth magazine programme aimed at encouraging the youth to vote.

²⁷ *Soul Buddyz* is a drama for 9 to 12 year olds focusing on children's rights, HIV/AIDS, sexuality, racism, xenophobia, child and substance abuse and offers health tips.

2.2.4.3.6. Formal education: Curriculum support

With regard to this category, Nicola Galombik contended that formal education programming was hard and difficult to achieve, and the SABC was trying to come up with programming in this regard: “As regards the part of schooling system, that is a harder, slower and a more difficult thing to achieve. But, we are doing it, we are piloting, we are working, we are trying and I think we have a pretty good model in place (Nicola Galombik, personal interview, 11 August 1999). Therefore, in the area of formal education in support of the curriculum, the SABC does not provide syllabus based programmes for use in schools but provides structural support to the formal system of education by providing resources which could be used in the classroom.

The only syllabus related programming provided by SABC in collaboration with the Liberty Learning Channel is the provision of a matric support programme popularly known by the name *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. It offers remedial support for matric, grade eleven and grade ten pupils (SABC, 2003), as Nicola Golambik indicated:

In regard to support for school system, particularly in regard to curriculum 2005, in the first two years of our work, [...] what we agreed with the Department of Education was that in addition to the *Learning Channel*, which we define largely as revision work for senior secondary students. Direct syllabus related revision work. [...] we were to do home based programme for kids. We were not trying to deliver, programmes for use in schools, but rather we would do two things; [...] to provide learning resources for students that would relate learning to life, so that education practice is being applied in the home. Secondly, form a culture of learning, in other words interest students in their subjects. [...] very much focus in the first few years, was [...] [on] what I would call non-formal support, not the formal system (Nicola Golambik, personal interview, 11 August 1999).

It is worth noting that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* is the main focus of this study.

Despite all the SABC’s educational television initiatives mentioned above, Galombik quoted in Mporu, Manhandu and Tomaselli (1996: 282) stated:

For the most part the educational programmes the SABC provides are characterised by a lack of creative innovation and critical educational methodology, and are out of touch with the realities and needs of educators

and learners on the ground. In appropriate teaching methodologies are reproduced through the media and longer -term educational developments is threatened as teachers are systematically undermined and displaced by “chalk and talk” style programmes on television. Very little educational programme production happens at a regional level and specific regional educational interests are largely neglected...in broadcasting all educational programmes must be of the same quality as general programmes, or better. They must be stimulating and engage the listener and the viewer in the same way as does news, public affairs light entertainment, documentary and drama programmes. If educational programmes fall below the normal expected standards they will not be effective and enormous resources will have been wasted. Quality programming depends on part on the development of a diverse and competitive production environment.

It is clear from the above quotation that there is a very limited specialised expertise in South Africa that can be deployed in educational broadcasting. However, presently, the SABC draws expertise and involvement from other partners and stakeholders such as the Department of Education, Department of Health, Universities and Technikons and other local and international partners (SABC Education, 2004). The limited specialise expertise is as a result of mainly two factors whose effects must now be redressed if educational broadcasting is to emerge from its pariah status. The broadcasting system neglected educational broadcasting. In an environment where educational broadcasting was perceived as a non-core activity, creating capacity and resources to undertake educational broadcasting was not a priority. This resulted in the present situation where there is virtually no capacity for the broadcasting system to undertake the training of skilled producers basing themselves on experience gained over time in educational broadcasting; and on the other hand, despite numerous and varied training programmes in the field of electronic media, the system of education and training as a whole has not produced skilled practitioners that can be integrated into the broadcasting system. Even though media and other technologies is now an inescapable facet of South Africans lives, the education system has failed to systematically integrate these in any significant way in teacher (A framework for educational programming in South Africa: final report of the task team for the transformation of educational broadcasting²⁸). Perhaps the above factor could also be

²⁸ A framework for educational programming in South Africa: final report of the task team for the transformation of educational broadcasting.
<http://www.icasa.org.za/Default.aspx?page=12658&moduledata=571> date accessed 22/4/2004.

said to be a challenge to South Africa in her pursuit to establishing a large scale television broadcast-based distance education.

As far as quality assurance of the SABC education programmes is concerned, Nicola Galombik stated that this was an area the SABC was still struggling to 'get things right', and that capacity building was needed towards attainment of quality programming (personal interview, 11 August 1999, see Appendix E). She further pointed out that the SABC was developing a system of ensuring quality programming based on capacity building by integrating skills from educators, producers, research, evaluation, and strengthening their partnership with the department of education and the provincial education departments, as Nicola narrated:

I think that the system that we are developing or we have got, but we are constantly trying to improve [...] is building capacity and joining the skills or integrating the skills of educators and producers. The second thing is research and evaluation and using the research and evaluation of schools children for pre-test. I think the third quality assurance thing is strengthening our partnerships, [...] [with] the department of education or the provincial departments of each of the schools (Nicola Golambik, personal interview, 11 August 1999).

It is the researcher's opinion that the SABC Education department is making some positive progress as far as ensuring quality programming is concerned if the number of programmes which have won international awards are to go by (see SABC 1999-2000 Annual reports²⁹; SABC Education, 2004 for information on some of the educational programmes which have won international awards).

The next part of the study will focus on *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

2.2.5. The history, production and distribution of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

2.2.5.1. The history of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

The financial, human and physical resources required to meet the education crisis are just not available if conventional methods are followed. Consequently it is essential

²⁹ SABC Education 1999-2000 Annual Report http://sabc.co.za/annual_report/contents.htm date accessed 9/3/2004

that innovative thinking is employed to provide alternative answers as to how the educational needs of South Africa's youth are met: *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* is an example of this type of thinking. William Smith's, (the founder, manager and also the science presenter of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*) contribution to education goes back to the 1980's when The Star Schools Project³⁰ became recognised as a significant institution in educating the disadvantaged (Liberty Life Foundation Report, 1995). In 1990, seizing the initiative and believing in Smith's dream and his charismatic personality, the Barlow Rand Trust sponsored what is now unprecedented in broadcasting history: a state-of-art, self-contained, one-person broadcast studio (Liberty Life Foundation Report, 1995), based almost entirely on National Panasonic equipment and built by National Panasonic experts to William Smith's design, it is a remarkable piece of modern technology (Clarke, 1991). It is in this studio, based at Sable Centre, 41 DeKorte Street, Braamfontein, Johannesburg, that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* and some of the programmes support materials are produced.

It is noteworthy that before the airing of the programme commenced, William Smith lobbied with a reluctant SABC for a contract to broadcast taped programmes, and in October and November 1990, the first tape-recorded broadcast- 'exam aid 90' was shown (Clarke, 1991). The first live broadcast was aired in 1993 (William Smith, personal interview, 11 August 1999, see Appendix E). The then Minister of Education, the SABC, the National Education Co-ordinating Committee, and several political bodies had been directly involved. Albeit with reluctance and resentment from certain quarters, all the above mentioned finally agreed that the programme was a good thing, a lifebelt for use while the education system works on its own solutions (Clarke, 1991). Today, *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* is perceived to have grown into an institution whose invaluable contribution to improving education for all South Africans is recognised by government and the corporate sector (Liberty Life Foundation Report, 1995).

³⁰ The Star Schools Project was started by William Smith and it offered mass education through lecture method to many disadvantaged students in different parts of the country. Classes were held during the weekends and on holidays. Presently, Star Schools operate in some parts of the country but under different management as William Smith sold the business before embarking on educational television (William Smith, telephone interview, 11 March 2000).

2.2.5.2. The production of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

The programme is produced by an independent organisation popularly known as Liberty Learning Channel. William Smith is assisted by two administrators (Leah Wright and Joelly Brookes), and a crew of three presenters, namely; Janet Unterslak (English), Moira Clarke (Mathematics), and Cathy Hastie (Biology). The presenters were recruited by William Smith based partly on their outstanding performance in the classroom shown by students' performance in matric exams. A screen test was then administered to the recruits and on passing this test they were trained to become presenters (see Appendix E). Moira Clarke (one of the presenters) illustrated this point best when she said:

I had done well as a maths teacher, I had got very good matric results. I came and I did a screen test [...] because you have obviously to be confident, you need to look okay on television, you don't have to be beautiful, but you need to look fair [...] [and] you need to speak clearly so that the children can understand and you (Moira Clarke, personal interview, 4 July 2000).

The above mentioned presenters produce the tape-recorded programmes and present the live broadcast of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, a broadcast of SABC 3. It is broadcast every Monday to Friday from 09.00am to 10.30 am as a live broadcast and sometimes in the afternoon from 14:30pm to 16:30 pm (which started in mid 2003). According to William Smith, the afternoon time slot is only given to them by the SABC if there is no coverage of cricket matches or live Parliament discussions (William Smith, telephone interview, 11 March 2004). There is also a Saturday broadcast from 9.00am to 11.30am, which until May 2003 was a replay broadcast for general education (aimed at primary children). From May 2003, the Saturday broadcast was changed to a live phone-in broadcast for grade 10-12 students and added another slot from 12:00 pm-13:00 pm. The programme broadcasts curriculum subjects for grades 10-12 and are scheduled as follows: Monday, English; Tuesday, Mathematics; Wednesday, Biology; Thursday, Science; and Friday, Science (The Liberty Life Foundation Report, 1995). Four hours a day of tape recorded programmes from the Liberty Learning Channel was being broadcasts on TV Africa to other parts of Africa until 2002 when the broadcast was stopped due to TV Africa channel going bankrupt (William Smith, telephone interview, 11 March 2004).

The daily broadcasts enable Liberty Learning Channel to act as an immediate and flexible means of communicating changes, trends, new concepts, syllabus, examination changes or educational policy. This service brings schools in touch with each other across the country (The Liberty Life Foundation Report, 1995). The target audience of the programme is matric students, but William Smith further relates that the programmes are watched by other people apart from the target audience (especially teachers) (See Appendix E). William Smith said:

You must realise if you run courses for teachers, you insult them. [...] So, what you do is you make it for the students, on our video club when they hire tapes, about 30 per cent of our teachers, they hire for themselves. So [...] there are a lot of teachers who watching and learning from it (Personal interview, 11 August 1999).

The programme supports the specific curricula of the current school system (William Smith, personal interview, 11 August 1999, see Appendix E). This is contrarily to what the programme was expected to focus on before the inception. Before the inception, the programme was expected to be subject based so that it could be useful to pupils in all of the existing education departments and syllabi (Seale, 1990). Therefore, the programme is primarily supplementary in nature, and provides enriching experiences for the learners.

Enrichment programmes are intended to reinforce and to supplement existing classroom teaching practices by making available information and experiences which are beyond the reach (and budget) of local schools. By providing appropriate examples and varied perspectives on established themes, as well as indirect access to cultural events of all kinds, enrichment programmes tend to be valued as much for their motivational impact as for their effects on learning (Mayo, 1989). There is only limited and somewhat contradictory evidence upon which to judge the effects of enrichment programmes on the quality of education in developing nations. In his view of media projects established to supplement formal school systems in Colombia (Television), India (Television) and Thailand (Radio) Schramm found that such programmes were popular with teachers and that students outperformed their counterparts in traditional classes on various achievement tests (Schramm, 1973: 174). The *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* is such kind of a programme.

However, Hylton Appelbaum, the executive director of Liberty Life Foundation, acknowledged that the programme was criticised by educationists for being syllabus based. He further added that there seems to be a conflict of what the educationists and the pupils wanted, as the pupils do not want the programme to be wide-ranging, but to be taught what is examinable (personal interview, 10 August 1999). Hylton Appelbaum explained:

It is curriculum based, it is the syllabus. So a lot of experts in education would like it to be wide ranging. [...] The kids do not want it to be wide ranging. The kids do not want it to come out enrol in understanding physics and spent the days before their exams looking at the intricacies of black old theories and wallowing their thoughts on broader physical issues. They want to pass their exams. [...] So, we have a conflict between the teachers and the students (Hylton Appelbaum, personal interview, 10 August 1999).

Also, envisaged at the inception of the programme was that the programme would be broadcast in English and through simulcasting techniques in Afrikaans and some African languages. This plan did not come to fruition since the broadcast is only aired in English. According to William Smith, this did not work because education cannot be simulcasted, as William points out “No. You can’t simulcast, education I don’t believe is something you can simulcast. [...] you’ve got to use the language precisely, carefully, directly, and to try and dub an educational programme, I think it’s impossible. So, it never materialised” (William Smith, personal interview, 6 July 2000). Filming the programme in classrooms was another plan which did not pick up. William Smith argued that this did not happen because it is too expensive and students would be frightened by having cameras in the classroom.

Further, the anticipated representation of the SABC, the department of education, newspaper groups and private industries in Liberty Learning Channel board was not realised. William Smith related that this plan did not materialise because it does not work and he does not need anybody else in the production of the programmes. Below is just a sample of what William Smith expressed as far as having the above sectors represented:

No, no, not at all. Liberty life, and the foundation if you want to call it that, that's all. Liberty Foundation and myself. That's it. Nobody else. I don't need anybody what for? SABC switches on to me for the programme, we do the programme from here, what they do is broadcast. What do I want education department for? They can't produce this, what do I need, nothing from them. What do I need SAIDE for? SAIDE hasn't got the experience, the money. SAIDE, I am afraid, but SAIDE, please show me what they have done, show me their research, show me how many kids they have helped. [...] They must understand I am happy to listen to everybody, but you must not come and start telling me how to do it when you haven't done it. [...] SABC hasn't done no, and when they did try, ah! terrible, everything went wrong, they fired the guy who did it. It didn't work (William Smith, personal interview, 6 July 2000).

Also shown in the above extract is the fact that Liberty Learning Channel is only in partnership with the Liberty Life Foundation. The SABC just provides the air space, period, and the Department of Education and the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) are not partners with the Liberty Life Learning Channel. Despite there being no SAIDE and Department of Education representatives in Liberty Learning Channel board, Hylton Appelbaum, related that they rely on expertise from SAIDE and follow the Department of Education's examination timetable and examination needs. Hyton Appelbaum explained this position succinctly:

Look, to call them all partners is difficult because Liberty Life Learning Channel, is a partnership between us and [...] the SABC. We are now, more and more relying on the brilliance and experts of SAIDE. [...] the relationship with the Department of Education tend to be that we [...] take the recognisance of their curricula, the exam time table, [and] the various Departments [...] examination needs criteria. [...] But it is not a partnership with them (Hylton Appelbaum, personal interview, 10 August 1999).

Also in the inception of the programme, teachers were to be provided with a weekly menu or guide, advising of the contents of the programmes and how they could best supplement the broadcast (Makobane, 1990). This too did not materialise.

2.2.5.3. Partners in the production of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

Speaking to William Smith during the researcher's participant observation (3-14 July 2000) stay at Liberty Learning Channel, he related that Liberty Learning Channel had merged with the Learning Channel Campus, the Liberty Life Educational Trust and the Krok brothers. In this merger, Liberty Life Learning Channel is entrusted with the presenting of the live broadcast and the production of the tapes, although tape

recorded programmes on Accounting, Business Economics and Geography are produced by staff from the Learning Channel Campus at Liberty Learning Channel studio. The Learning Channel Campus was given the task of duplicating the tape recorded programmes from Liberty Learning Channel, marketing; selling and the distribution of the tapes to the consumers. The Liberty Life Educational Trust sponsors Liberty Learning Channel and has shares in the Learning Channel Campus, and the Krok Brothers sponsors the Learning Channel Campus. In 2002, Johnnic³¹ Learning Channel bought the whole company. Johnnic Learning Channel is part of Johnnic holdings limited-one of the South Africa's most successful black-owned conglomerates (Agence France-Press, 2003). Johnnic holdings limited owns Johnnic publishing (newspapers, magazines, maps and books), Johnnic e-ventures (Johnnic learning), Johnnic entertainment (Gallo records, New Metro Videos and Theatres), and Johnnic Telecom (MTN Group). According to William Smith, Johnnic has 60 per cent shareholding (telephone interview, 12 March 2004). The rest of the shares are owned by Learning Channel and its other partners. This merger with Johnnic Learning strengthens both companies need to bring about fundamental changes in the education system by providing innovative educational solutions appropriate to the broad South African market, a task neither the government nor the public sector can do it by themselves.

Worth noting is that the development of the final form of a television programme must be seen as a result of the complex interactions between the television communicators (producers, writers, directors), the organisational apparatus that supports them (financiers, distributors, advertisers, audiences), the social context in which they operate, and the structures inherent in the television encoding process. The various members of the production process who interact with each other often have different orientations concerning the artistic and ideological nature of the final product. However, they influence each other when decisions are made and inevitably reach compromise in the process (Mersham, 1989: 220; Ural, 1991: 31). In the production and encoding process the influence of external factors is felt, as media production is a collective effort and no individual communicator is completely

³¹ <http://www.co.za/holdings/group/structure.Asp> date accessed 18/3/2004.
<http://www.johncom.co.za/empower.asp> date accessed 29/4/2004.

responsible for the final product (Van Zoonen, 1994: 46). In Liberty Learning Channel, there is no production done of the live broadcast as each presenter prepares for and presents his / her lesson. The only production done at Liberty Learning Channel premises is that of the tapes, and it is done by the same presenters who do the live broadcast, with Accounting, Business Economics and Geography being produced by staff from the Learning Channel Campus.

Unfortunately the production process of the video tapes and a description of the studio where the airing of the live broadcast is done will not be provided as the researcher was requested not to do so by William Smith. He argued that it was the company's secret and if description of the production process and the studio was given, the researcher would be infringing patent rights (personal interviews, 6 July 2000, see Appendix E). William Smith asserted that the production of the tapes cannot be described because "it's my patent, it's my secret, my brains developed it and I am using it. Why must I give it to somebody else?" (William Smith, personal interview, 6 July 2000).

In the production of the programme, Smith stated that teachers' views are incorporated in the design of the programme but not the students'. He suggested that students' views are represented by teachers since teachers knew their students needs (William Smith, personal interview, 11 August 1999, see Appendix E). All the presenters of the programme were unanimous in pointing out that the programmes are developed with the needs of the target audience in mind as they were all teachers, wrote textbooks, marked exams, knew the subject matter and the students needs and problems. William Smith, the science subject presenter put this position succinctly:

Remember everybody who presents it [...] talk[s] to teachers, [...] they do teach teachers, they are marking exams, they are subject examiners, they set exams and [...] they know the subject[...]. They are in the classroom and because of the class that they taught, they know the pupils, they know exactly the pupils problems (William Smith, personal interview, 11 August 1999).

There is no quality assurance structure in Liberty Learning Channel. Often the audience of the programme act as the checks and balances of the programme as every time a presenter makes a mistake on air, members of the audience phone-in to inform

the presenter of the mistake she/he made on air. Moira Clarke, the Mathematics presenter explained this clearly in the following:

Believe me, believe me, there are millions out there that if I make an error on television, within five minutes, [the] phone has gone, twenty times. And if I do make a error, [...] occasionally it's a careless mistake where I will put a three instead of a two and normally the child will depict that and if the child didn't, like I did today, I put a one instead of a two and the child saw it was a two. Say they didn't, believe me the phone will go, and say in the previous question there was something wrong (Moira, personal interview, 4 July 2000).

2.2.5.4. The funders or sponsors of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

Liberty Life Foundation has been the main sponsor of the programme since its inception, but in 2003 the Standard Bank joined Liberty Life Foundation in this role (William Smith, telephone interview, 11 March 2004). The amount spent in funding *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* is between Rands 2 to 5 million a year, as stated by Hylton Appelbaum: "Between two and five million a year. I mean its not a huge sum of money, its not inexpensive, but relatively speaking it is cheap if you look at the number of hours [...] its probably about fifty or sixty or seventy rands per minute" (Hylton Appelbaum, personal interview, 10 August 1999). The cost of production per minute was confirmed by William Smith to be about fifty Rand per minute. He explained: "The cost of production is very cheap. [...] About fifty rands a minute. Because of the way we do it. That's the first thing which makes it possible" (William Smith, personal Interview, 11 August 1999).

Other organizations which back certain aspects of Liberty Learning Channel are the *Sowetan*³² Newspaper and Sony Corporation³³. The *Sowetan* newspaper supports Liberty Learning Channel with the circulation of the print supplement, while the Sony

³² *Sowetan* is part of the powerful stable of Nail media companies (Tissong, <http://www.sowetan.co.za/public/info/brief.html> date accessed 11/3/2004). It is positioned as the biggest daily in the country, with a readership of almost 2 million and surveys indicate that the black people call Sowetan their paper (Tissong <http://www.Sowetan.co.za/public/info/nationbuiding.html> date accessed 11/3/2004) However, the bulk of its readership is in Gauteng, followed by Mpumalanga and the North West. The balance is spread across the remaining six provinces of South Africa (Hitzeroth, <http://www.sowetan.co.za/public/info/introduction.html> date accessed 11/3/2004).

³³ Sony Corporation is an innovative Japanese consumer-electronic company founded by Masaru Ibuka and Akio Morita in 1946. It also owns Colombia Pictures and Entertainment (CPE), which owns Colombia Pictures and TriStar Pictures- home video distribution, a theatre chain, and a film library (<http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/s/html/s/sonycorporation.htm> date of access 18/3/2004).

Corporation backs the organization with tapes. Initially, Telkom³⁴ supported Liberty Learning Channel with telephone bill but was replaced by MTN³⁵. However, Liberty Learning Channel lost the MTN support in 2003 because the organization messed with their relationship with MTN (Smith was reluctant to disclose how the company messed this partnership) (William Smith, telephone interview, 11 March, 2004). Also, the print supplement was initially (first half of 1993) carried by the Argus company³⁶ but not currently (William Smith, telephone interview, 11 March 2004). According to William Smith, the reason why Argus group stopped circulating the supplement was because the supplement had errors as Argus group mistyped and some sections were often missing:

What was happening [...] was [that] [...] we send down the material [to Argus group], and then they would put it into the newspaper format and then make mistakes. What was worse was that they get the material and the space that is a located for some reason they changed [the space]. So it's cut off into half. So we had half the tutorial, and the viewers started to moan, so we said no, it's just too many problems because every week there was problem somewhere. They left out pieces, they left out paragraphs, and they mistyped it (William Smith, personal interview, 6 July 2000).

Another reason why Argus company stopped circulating the supplement was that *Sowetan* wanted a full control of the supplement, as William argues:

I think that the *Sowetan* [...] there was a bit of a hiccup with them [Argus company]. We didn't get involved with politics of it, but the *Sowetan*, I think wanted it basically for their own. And right now the *Sowetan* controls the back up material. The other newspapers have asked for it, and the *Sowetan* said no. (William Smith, personal interview, 6 July 2000).

³⁴ Telkom is South Africa's leading integrated communications operator. It provides wire lines and wireless services throughout South Africa and other parts of the African continent. It has 50 per cent shareholding of Vodacom-a South African cellular network and has a strategic equity partnership with SBC of USA and Telekom Malaysia, which jointly holds 30 per cent shareholding in the company (<http://www.telkom.co.za/company/profile.jsp> date accessed 11/3/2004).

³⁵ MTN is a South African cellular network operator. It is owned by Johnnic holdings. MTN has an obligation to contribute towards enhancing the quality of life in communities where it operates. MTN's numerous social investments are streamlined into four focus areas: Education, HIV/AIDS, Science and Technology, and Arts and Culture (<http://www.mtn.co.za/home.about.asp>; <http://www.mtn.co.za/home/foundation/> date accessed 11/3/2004).

³⁶ Argus company is now called Independent News and Media. Independent News and Media owns Independent online (IOL), 14 national and regional newspapers (http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=268&click_id=2227 date accessed 10/3/2004).

The above extract seems to imply that there is competition between the *Sowetan* and the Argus company (now called Independent News and Media) on who has the control of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* print supplement.

2.2.5.5. The marketing and evaluation of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

Representation is clearly essential for culture. It carries meanings and allows them to be communicated. The way in which things are represented colours our understandings of them and the ways we share this with others (Du Gay, 1997). *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* is promoted on television, radio, newspapers, Internet and magazines. With Liberty Learning Channel mission statement “Liberty Learning Channel, nation building through education”, it is helpful in situating the product with familiar discourse (Liberty Life Foundation-a well known insurance company in South Africa and internationally, and nation building-a familiar term to South Africans especially when speaking of reconstruction and transformation of different sectors of the economy).

Meaning by association is also made by associating Liberty Learning Channel with MTN cellular telephones, Burlow Rand, Sony company, Standard Bank, and the SABC, which are institutions known for provision of good service to the public. The planned consumption base also shaped the representation of the programme by those involved in marketing and advertising. One of the television advertisements of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* shows pupils in school uniform running into a classroom with a television set placed in front. Another advert, this time print based, shows the words “No sweat! Matric exam revision-no problem...we got the answers” accompanied by a picture of a stylish young man. These aims to promote the product to its market by creating an identification with its target audience and where the consumption of the programme was expected to take place.

With regard to evaluation of the programme, Liberty Learning Channel attempts to gain feedback about the consumers or audience activities mostly through audience ratings and occasional feedback through comments down the streets or letters from viewers thanking the presents for helping them in their particular subjects (see Appendix D). Moira Clarke the mathematics presenter illustrated this point best when

she said: “only from the feedback I get when I am in Transkei [...] or when I walk down the street [...]. Or somebody may phone-in and say [...] thank you so much we love the programme [...]. That [...] [is the] sort of feedback [and] we get [...] lots of lots of letters” (Moirá Clarke, personal interview, 4 July 2000).

It is the researcher’s opinion that this kind of monitoring is not sufficient. When letters come in praising or complaining, it is very difficult to tell how much of the audience it represents. A detailed ethnographic study of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* is presented in chapter three part two of this thesis.

2.2.5. 6. The distribution of *Liberty Life Learning Channel Programme*

The *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* is the primary text (both live school based broadcasts and live phone-in broadcasts). These live broadcasts are supplemented by the *Sowetan* supplement, Internet materials and materials on video cassettes which can be acquired through Liberty Learning Channel Video Club or buying of video tapes from the Learning Channel Campus. CD-ROM is also another secondary text but during the time of my participant observation, the CD-ROMs were not being used since they were being developed. According to Lisa Blakeway, the Learning Channel Campus public relations officer, distribution of Liberty Learning Channel materials on CD-ROMs has not yet started, but they hope to release CD-ROMs to the market in 2006 (Lisa Blakeway, telephone interview, 12 March 2004). Therefore, it is correct to argue that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* is distributed through television (live school broadcast and the live phone-in programmes), newspapers (in this case the *Sowetan*); the Internet, video cassettes and in future through CD-ROMs.

2.2.5.6.1. Television: The live broadcast

The live broadcast is divided into two categories; the school broadcast and the phone-in broadcast. In the case of the school broadcast, schools select the subject and advise Liberty Learning Channel on the area they would like covered. Once the application has been confirmed, the participating school becomes the host school and receives Rands 500 towards costs such as extending a telephone into the classroom or rental. The topic is publicised in the press (*Sowetan* newspaper) and on air well in advance. Based on the 2004 Liberty Learning Channel television guide, the school broadcasts are aired in three blocks of time: from 21st January to 25th March; 15th April to 30th

June; and from 21st July to 21st September (Liberty Learning Channel³⁷). To participate, a school needs a television set tuned to SABC 3; telephone line in the same room as the television set with enough seats for the pupils. The phone must be as far away from the television set as possible to prevent noise feedback. Three photographs (one of the school, the participating pupils and their subject teacher) are broadcast during the programme. The name of the school and telephone number should be written on the back of all photographs before they are mailed to Liberty Learning Channel.

On the day of the broadcast the teacher and pupils of the host school gather in front of a television set and watch the programme on SABC 3 and Liberty Learning Channel links with the host school during the programme via toll-free phone lines. At the start of the broadcast, the presenter introduces the school, the subject teacher and the participating pupils by showing their photographs and talking to them via the phone. During the broadcast, the pupils assisted by their teacher, conduct a two-way lesson with Liberty Learning Channel teacher. During the broadcast it is essential that the person on the phone talks and listens on the phone but watches the television set. The rest of the class listens to the television set. The volume of the television set must also be turned down sufficiently low to prevent noise feedback. Other schools are invited to watch and what transpires during these broadcasts is published as part of the educational supplement (Liberty Life Foundation Report, 1995:15). The school broadcast follows the syllabus i.e. teaches curriculum content of what the matric students are supposed to know in the topics chosen by the host schools.

Regarding the live phone-in broadcast, it is not restricted to a certain topic of the syllabus, students phone-in with any problem they are seeking assistance. Also, according to 2004 Liberty Learning Channel television guide, the phone-in programmes are done in three time blocks: from 25th March to 14th April; 25th June to 20th July; and 22nd September until 15th of November. Worth noting is that in the afternoon time slot whenever it is available, all the programmes are phone-in. Also all Liberty Learning Channel Saturday broadcasts are phone-in (William Smith, telephone interview, 11 March 2004).

³⁷ Liberty Learning Channel <http://www.learn.co.za/> date accessed 12/3/2004.

In order to ensure that questions of broad general interest are asked, the programme administrators (Leah Wright and Joelly Brookes) organise a number of pre-arranged questions with viewers in advance. This not only allows each programme to stay 'on course', but it also acts as an insurance against a shortage of genuine callers during the interactive section of the programme. On the other hand, the presenters argued that the pre-arranged questions anticipated the most likely questions from the audience, and that even though many viewers could not ask a question themselves, they would have heard someone else ask a similar question, and would thus feel some sense of corporate belonging with the wider audience. The administrators reported that they do not take questions from students who are not clear in their speech and students calling from telephone boxes because during the broadcast the conversation is often disrupted by the phone cutting. They also related that in each day of the broadcast there were more callers than the broadcast can handle and students are advised to try the next broadcast.

Each day of the broadcast, the audience starts calling in with their questions at 9.00am, an hour before the live broadcast. An incoming call would be received on the 0800 number or toll free number, and the caller's name, number and the nature of their question would be recorded. The caller is advised that they should be around a room with a television set and a phone as they could be conducted during the broadcast. At an appropriate time later in the programme, the caller would be phoned back by the administrators who then link the caller to the presenter on another line. Meanwhile, the callers name and location would be typed on a caption generator at the SABC³⁸ and would appear on the television monitor for all viewers to see. This allows the presenter to introduce the caller. The presenter then initiates discussion with the caller in hands-free mode that allows all viewers to hear the conversation. Then the lesson progress as the callers communicate their problems and participate in the programme via toll-free telephone.

³⁸ Note that the programme is presented from Liberty Learning Channel offices at Bramfontein and linked to SABC through optic fibre. The only thing SABC does once in a while is to type the callers names on a caption generator.

Then the live broadcasts at Liberty Learning Channel are linked to the SABC, who are the broadcaster via fibre optic. Fibre optic systems are thin glass strands through which a laser light is shone. The light rays are reflected on the sides of the tube and when the signal reaches their final destination, the light shines onto a detector which turns light into electronic current and either analogue or digital pulses (see Straubhaar and Larose, 1996: 269). Light uses far less energy than an electronic current, so these strands have virtually unlimited capacity to convey information (Scholtz and Steyn, 1998: 475). Then the SABC 3 distributes the programme through television signals to a majority of places and homes through wireless transmission over the terrestrial frequency spectrum which is commonly known as free-to-air television. The three channels of the SABC have been transmitted over this medium and are easily received over-the air using a simple reception antenna (Ministry for Posts, Telecommunications and Broadcasting, 1997; Department of Education, 1996:10).

Real-time interactivity in both live school broadcast and phone-in programmes come from the use of a toll-free call-back telephone number that enables the viewers to communicate directly with the presenter. Other forms of interaction that are made include off-air calls to the presenter, and facsimile communications with the presenter.

2.2.5.6.1.1. Challenges encountered in the preparation and presentation of the programme

Some of the challenges encountered by presenters in their preparation and presentation of the programme are: dealing with both higher grade and standard grade work in one programme; students phoning-in with questions presenters have never heard before and the English presenter not knowing all the different English literature set books for the different provincial education departments (see Appendix E). As pertains the lack of knowledge of the different English literature set books, Janet Unterslak, the English presenter was of the opinion that the provincial departments of education were not helpful in giving information. Janet Unterslak explained that “the educational departments are not very helpful, even getting exam papers at the end of the year it’s very difficult. [...]Yah, it is a challenge” (Janet Unterslak, personal interview, 4 July 2000).

Due to the above problem, Janet Uterslak had a feeling that getting information to Liberty Learning Channel was not a priority to the education departments, as Janet remarked: “I don’t think that they [departments of education] are not supportive, I just don’t think that getting information out to us is a priority. But the Western Cape this year has been very supportive” (Janet Uterslak, personal interview, 4 July 2000).

Other challenges which lead to the cancellation of the broadcast are: when there is a major sporting event in the country the broadcast is replaced by sports; blackouts; burning of the television monitors in the studio; and presenters being sick. Also, during the preparation for the broadcast, some of the callers just call for no apparent reason and hung up when the administrators respond to their calls and this makes it difficult for the administrators to judge who are genuine callers.

2.2.5.6.2. Videocassettes

The videocassettes as mentioned earlier are produced at Liberty Learning Channel studio. The studio is unique in that it produces master video at a fraction of the cost of normal studios. It enables the teacher/presenter to have full control over the production and editing which results in a completely spontaneous programme. After the production of tapes at Liberty Learning Channel, a master copy is sent to the Learning Channel Campus where duplication, marketing and distribution of the tapes is done. The Learning Channel Campus has an extensive library of approved, syllabus specific, educational programmes on tapes covering mathematics (from grade 2 to 12), Biology, Science, Geography, Business economics, Accountings and English (first and second language) for grades 10, 11 and 12.

Lessons include all the ‘outside’ material needed to make the lesson come alive and relate to everyday life. So far no tapes viewed anywhere world-wide have been able to stand up to the educational value of the videos produced in this way. For example, in 1984 in the UK, the basic mathematics course was rated the best educational video series in the world. Schools using the videos have reported outstanding success with them, even when no teacher has been present (Smith, 1987: 4).

Over 1, 500 schools and many companies are using the programmes for the benefit of both teachers and students, as well as literacy and numeracy adult education

programmes. Private users are drawn from many spheres, including amongst others: schools for supplementary tuition, teacher upgrading etc., universities for bringing courses; companies for in-house training; and private foundations with their own educational activities. In a conversation with William Smith, he said that the Gauteng Department of Education was spending R 10 million in buying of the tapes. The tapes are also sold to other African countries like Zimbabwe, Namibia and Botswana. Also one of the administrators (by the name Leah Wright) reported that the tapes were being used in Saudi Arabia. She narrated that there was a woman whose husband was transferred to Saudi Arabia and she got a part-time teaching job. She needed help with science and thus bought the tapes. However, William Smith disclosed that there was very little selling of the tapes outside South Africa.

Videocassettes are also accessible to individual user through Liberty Learning Channel Video Club. In the year 2000, a membership fee of R 100 was payable on joining the video club which is refundable when membership is cancelled provided there are no outstanding hiring fees or fines and all hired tapes have been returned. A hiring fee, depending on the length of tape was charged (ranging from R30-120). Tapes may be kept in the members possession for a maximum of three days and members are able to take one topic at a time. A penalty of R1 per day per set of tapes was charged for overdue tapes (Allowance was made for postal members). There was a charge of R 50 per hour (or part thereof) for unreturned or damaged tapes. The tapes were accompanied by workbooks. For postal members, postage was payable both ways by the member. Tapes were to be sent by insured mail, and correctly packaged to avoid damage. An amount of R 30 was charged for postage and packaging. Out of town pupils may pay by direct deposit and fax to Liberty Learning Channel the signed copy of the contract together with the deposit slip and a list of tapes required, so that tapes can be mailed to them immediately.

2.2.5.6.3. Newspaper: The *Sowetan*

The *Sowetan* newspaper provides invaluable assistance to Liberty Learning Channel by circulating the weekly educational supplement. The supplement is distributed every Friday and forms the print reference material containing up-to-date information and tutorials to support the channel's programming. By 1995, this support material had become so sophisticated that it not only carried the exercises done during each

broadcast, but also included all the necessary extras for pupils to build up their own textbooks over the year at a cost far less than that needed to purchase formal textbooks (Liberty Life Foundation Report, 1995: 13-14). The *Sowetan* benefits from this relationship by getting large readership as grade12 examination materials seem to be a very attractive carrot, because they encourage readership. Mr. H. G. Raubenheimer of Via Africa publishers, which produces *Learning Press* (a matriculation supplement in City Press), claimed that circulation goes up 50 per cent during the 33 weeks a year when the newspaper contains the supplement (Botha, 1993: 7).

Questions which go into the supplement are prepared by the presenters. Each subject presenter sets questions and answers which they deem are relevant for matric revision in addition to some of the questions asked by the students during the broadcast. The questions are then given to the two administrators of Liberty Learning Channel, who type and put the questions in the format required for the supplement. Then, each Monday or sometimes on Tuesday, a person from the *Sowetan* Newspaper collects the supplement from Liberty Learning Channel ready to be inserted in the *Sowetan* Friday edition.

The schedule of the programme is published on Liberty Learning Channel web site and in the *Sunday Times*³⁸ *Magazine*, where the whole SABC, etv³⁹ and M-NET⁴⁰ programme schedules are drawn. Wordings used in the *Sunday Times Magazine* in reference to *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* varies from time to time. At times the schedule may lead “the Learning Channel”; “the Learning Channel-history, mathematics, science or biology”; and other times it may lead “the Learning Channel,

³⁸ The *Sunday Times* is a weekly newspaper produced by Johnnic publishing, a subsidiary of Johnnic Holdings <http://www.suntimes.co.za/2003/12/21/news/new01.asp> date accessed 18/3/2004.

³⁹ etv is South Africa’s only independent free-to-air broadcaster. It was officially launched in 1999. It is owned by Midi Television (a black owned consortium of associations and syndicates representing workers, women and disabled people) and Time Warner (http://www.inet.org/Fe_articles/Assetshow.asp?ID=238 date accessed 17/3/2004).

⁴⁰ M-NET is South Africa’s only subscription television service. It was launched in 1986 and broadcast encrypted signals using the terrestrial frequency spectrum (http://www.inet.org/Fe_articles/Assetshow.asp?ID=238 date accessed 17/3/2004). M-NET is part of Naspers, a multinational media company with it’s principal operations in pay television, print media, book publishing, private education and technology markets (Naspers, 2003).

lessons for high school pupils”. No details of what topics to be covered were provided in the case where the subjects are mentioned. On the whole, the schedule lacks details, which are necessary if pupils and teachers are to prepare to use the programme. On the contrary, the guide on the Internet provides topics to be covered each day. It is the researchers opinion that similar details should be put in the *Sunday Times Magazine*, since most of the teachers and students have no access to the Internet.

2.2.5.6.5. The Internet

Internet Solutions is Liberty Learning Channel’s service provider. During the time of my participant observation (3-14 July 2000) the Internet site <http://www.learn.co.za/> contained materials on Biology, Mathematics, Science, English, Business Economics’, Accounting and Geography, which students who have Internet connection could print out and use to supplement their classroom work. At the time of this thesis completion, Liberty Learning Channel was revising the web site content in line with the new outcome-based education curriculum. On the site was an archive containing links to: virtual laboratories on Chemistry, Geography, Biology and Science where step by step animated experiments can be viewed; a link to an electronic library where students can read novels and information on selected comedies, tragedies and poems; an announcement link, where at the moment contained an announcement of matric revision seminars to be held by the Liberty Learning Channel during the course of October and November 2003; information on how to order for video tapes was provide i.e. name of contact person, e-mail address and a telephone number. There was also a link titled pass your matric, offering exam pointers and tips; links on how to conduct Learning Channel, on information about Liberty Learning Channel and a link to 2004 Liberty Learning Channel television guide for the whole of 2004.

2.2.5.6.5. CD-ROMs

At the time of my participant observation, the development of the CD-ROM materials was underway. The contents of the CD-ROM were to be taken from stock materials in video tapes and past examination papers. They were also to do an interactive CD-ROM with questions, reactions and video clips. At the time of my observation, they were considering outsourcing. They had not yet come up with a strategy of how they were going to prize the CD-ROMs, although William Smith acknowledged that the

CD-ROMs would be expensive for the ordinary child. During the completion of this thesis, the sale of Liberty Learning Channel's materials on CD-ROMs had not started. Speaking to Lisa Blakeway, Learning Channel Campus public relations officer, she related that the organization is hoping to release CD-ROMs to the market in 2006. She further said that one of the reasons why Liberty Learning Channel and partner organisations were slow in developing the CD-ROM's was because teachers are frightened by technology and they hoped that by 2006, teachers would be more informed about the use of technology in education (Lisa Blakeway, telephone interview, 12 March 2004).

Research to determine the consumption of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was therefore undertaken using a questionnaire (Chapter three Part one) and focus group interviews administered to matric teachers and students (Chapter three Part two).

CHAPTER THREE

PART ONE

Teachers and students who participated in the focus group interviews

3.1.1. Introduction

The objectives of this part of the study were to elicit demographic information on the usage of educational television, and in particular *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, from focus groups constituting of both Grade 12 teachers and students. Thirty-two focus group interviews, sixteen for teachers and sixteen for students, were conducted from urban (multi-racial, formerly for Whites only), peri-urban (Tongaats, predominantly Indian learners) and Imbali Township in Pietermaritzburg (predominantly for Black learners), and rural schools in KwaZulu Natal (Eshowe Township, predominantly for Black learners). Of note is that during the apartheid era, development efforts largely were concentrated in the high-income White urban enclaves, neglecting the majority of the Black population. Therefore, socio-economic inequalities were particularly marked by affluence in White communities, and the poverty of the 'native reserves' and homelands inhabited by majority of Blacks (Chikulo, 2003).

Racial segregation in the economic sector, education, health and social welfare, "left deep scars" of inequality and poverty in the Black section of the society, which was characterised by abject poverty and minimal access to basic social and economic resources (Chikulo, 2003). In 1994, following the demise of apartheid, the African National Congress (ANC) government adopted a development strategy to begin the redress of these inequalities. This strategy is articulated in the original 1994 Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (ANC, 1994:1). However, as a development policy document, the RDP had a number of shortcomings: it looked like 'a wish list' than a strategy document focusing on opportunities and constraints; it made no attempt to set priorities or to assign responsibility for the implementation of each programme component; it lacked mechanisms for inter-departmental co-ordination; and finally the local government, which had been assigned constitutional responsibility for promoting socio-economic development did not have adequate planning and implementation capacity (Chikulo, 2003).

While the government appeared to be content with the RDP's objectives, problems began to surface from 1995. The economy, in particular, was not growing at the envisaged rates and the problem of achievements falling behind expectations impacted negatively on the RDP policy strategy (Chikulo, 2003). Thus, in 1996, the RDP was replaced by another development strategy by the name Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR). GEAR did not completely depart from the earlier government policy, as some of the policies initiated in the RDP were subsequently incorporated in it (Chikulo, 2003). Gear continues to be the governments development policy. In spite of the governments efforts, the apartheid legacy remains almost intact or unchanged (Knight, 2001; Xundu, 2002; Chikulo, 2003). Therefore, the social economic status of the areas investigated in this study can be understood based on the aforementioned history. Below is a KwanZulu-Natal map indicating the regions where focus group participants were derived.

The researcher arbitrarily selected the schools in the above regions on the basis of willingness of the respective inspector of schools and principals to participate in the project on specific dates. The focus group interviews were derived based on socio-economic status of the schools and the four subject broadcasts of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* (English, Mathematics, Biology and Science). There was one focus group per subject from each category of schools and regions, for teachers and for students. Overall, four focus groups each of teachers and students per subject were drawn from schools which charged R6000-R7000 annually for fees, schools charging R5000-R4000, schools charging R2000-R3000, and schools charging R1000 or less fees per year. The fee structure was used as an indicator of socio-economic status within the respective school communities. The proposed focus group size for both teachers and students was seven to ten participants (see chapter one part two section 1.2 for more on the methodology).



Figure Two. A map of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, showing areas where participants of this study were situated.

Key

- *: Represents the Location of the areas where the study was carried out
- *T: Represents the location of Tongaat, one of the areas under study, which is not marked on the map

The demographic data was collected by use of a questionnaire, which was given to focus group participants' before the start of the interviews. These questions served to provide insight into the backgrounds of the respondents in terms of age, gender, subjects taken or taught, location of schools, fees charged in the schools per year, and ownership of television sets at school and at home. This was in order to investigate whether the location of schools and fees charged per year had any influence on the viewership of educational programmes and in particular *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. The location of schools and fees charged is important in the South Africa

situation because the area one lives in and the schools one's children attend, very much reflect the economic status of that person. Additionally, the study investigated whether age and subject taken or taught influenced the kind of television programmes watched. Lastly, the investigation focused on whether the ownership of television sets at home and school influenced the viewership of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

3.1.2. Results and discussion of student and teacher survey

Results from the survey showed that the sample size of students and teachers involved in the focus group interviews were 145 and 58, respectively. This number goes well beyond a 'saturated sample' for qualitative research defined it as "the point at which additional life histories add particulars, but do not increase the general understanding about the group" (Barnhurst and Wartella, 1998: 282). This point has been found to be somewhere between 25 and 30 (Bertaux, 1981). Forty-nine per cent of the students and 43 per cent of the teachers were male and 51 per cent of the students and 57 per cent of the teachers were female. The composition of the respondents, in terms of location, is shown in figure three, while age distribution is illustrated in figure four.

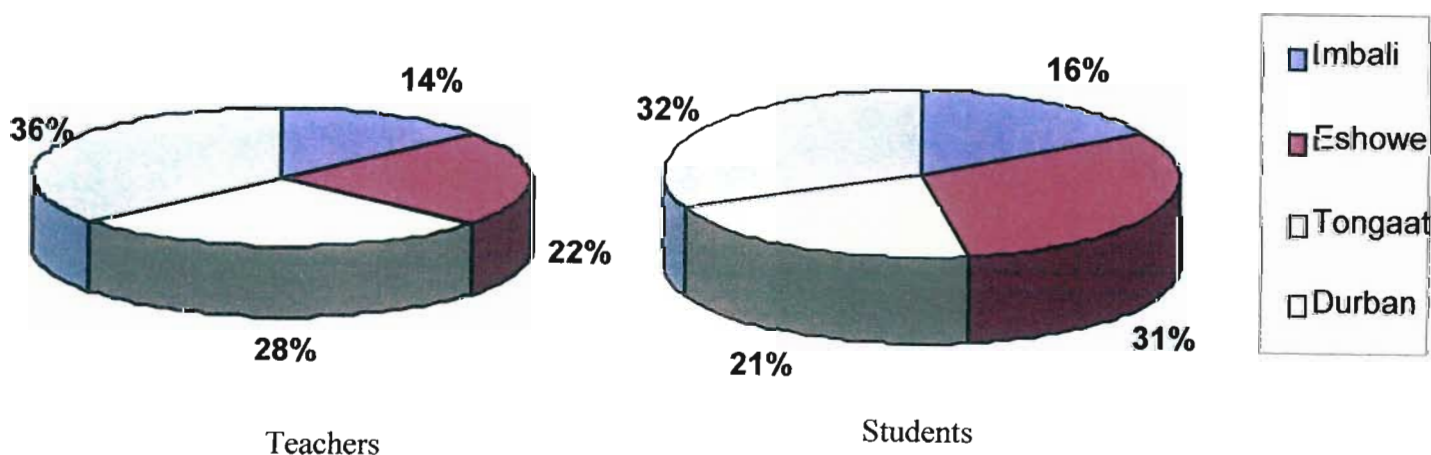


Figure Three: Percentage of teachers (n=58) and students (n=145) from different regions studied, who participated in the focus group interviews.

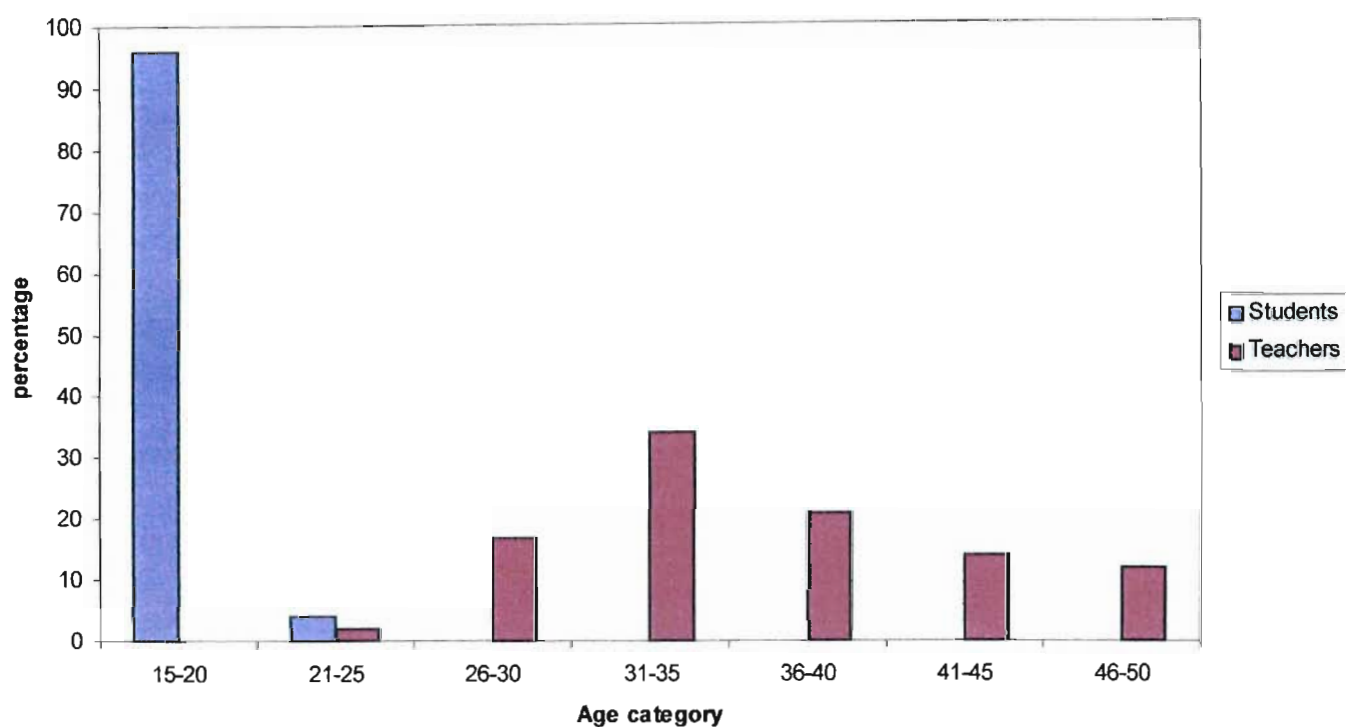


Figure Four: Age of students (n=145) and teachers (n=58) who participated in the focus group interviews.

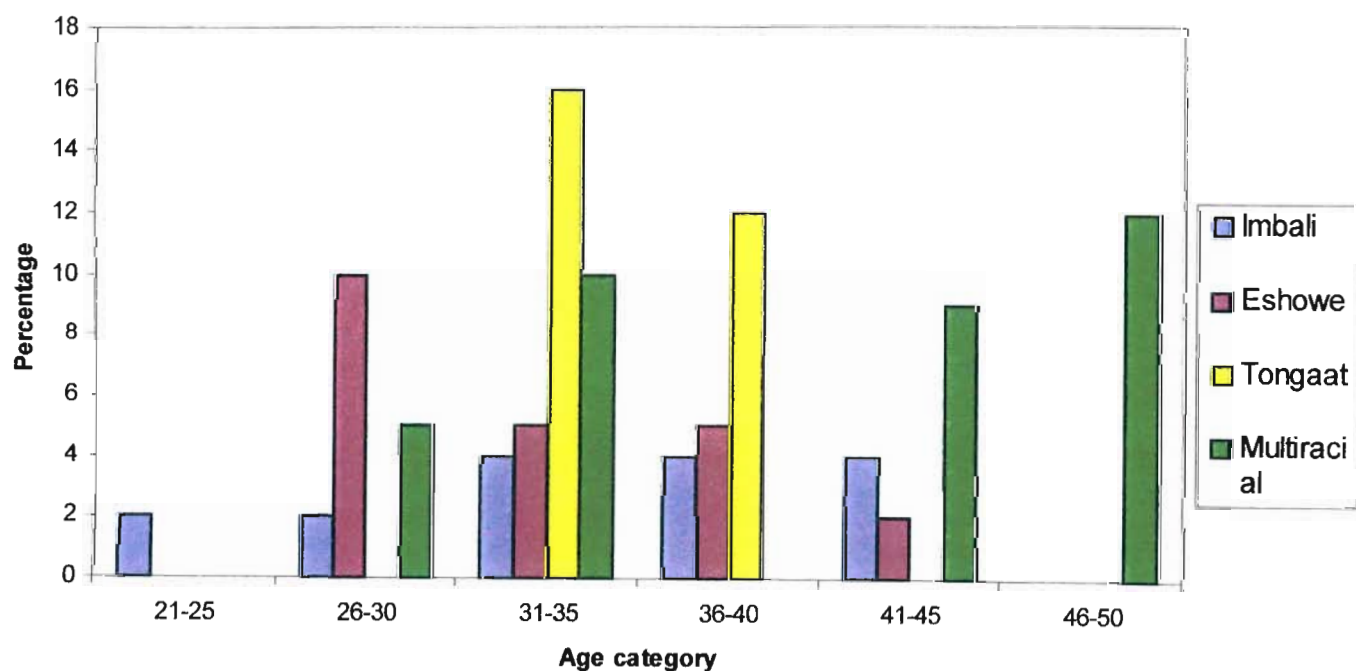


Figure Five: Age group of teachers (n= 58) from the different regions studied

Results presented in figure five illustrate that Imbali region had the youngest teachers, 2 per cent of whom were between ages 21-25 and 26-30 respectively, followed by Eshowe with 10 per cent of the teachers being between ages 26-30, and 5 per cent of the teachers from multi-racial schools were from same age category. Overall, the majority of the older teachers were from multi-racial schools, with 12 per cent being in the age category 46-50 and 9 per cent in age category 41-45 years old. Imbali and Eshowe region had 4 per cent of its teachers between ages 31-35 and 36-40, respectively, and 4 per cent of them in age category 41-45 years. On the other hand Eshowe region had 5 per cent of the teachers in age categories 31-35 and 36-40 respectively and only 2 per cent in the age category 41-45 years old. Assuming that age and experience in subject matter go hand-in-hand, overall findings showed that multi-racial school had more experienced teachers than Imbali, Eshowe and Tongaat regions. Possession of experience and the lack of it may influence the teachers' decisions to watch or not to watch *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. The more experienced teachers may not see the need for the programme while the less experienced may need the programme to assist them in subject content and methods of teaching. Furthermore, the older teachers may possibly be more suspicious of new technologies.

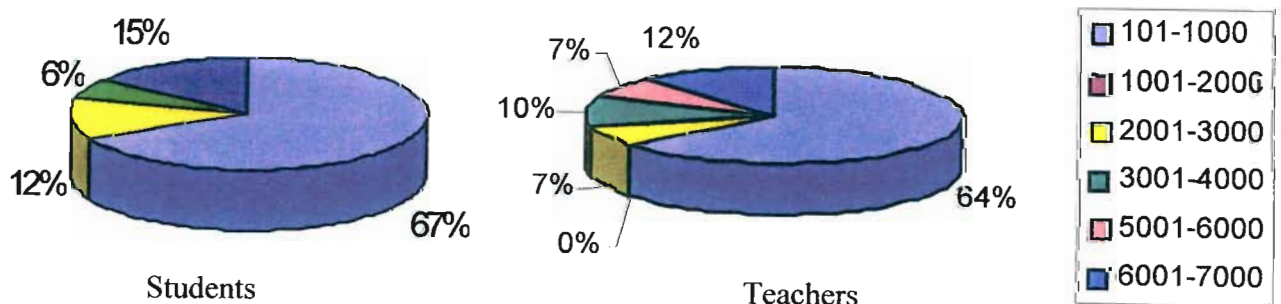


Figure Six: Percentage responses of students (n=145) and teachers (n=58) on the amount of annual fees (in Rands) charged in their schools.

Of the students who participated in the focus group interviews, 67 per cent indicated that they paid fees between R101-R1000 a year, with 64 per cent of the teachers

reporting the same fee figure for their students (see figure six). The highest fees per annum (R6001-R7000) was paid by 15 per cent of the students, with 10 per cent of the teachers giving the same figure for their students fees (see figure six).

Table One: Fee categories from each region as given by the teachers (n =58) and students (n=145) focus group participants

Fees Categories	Percentage of Teachers and Students from different regions in each fee category							
	Multiracial		Imbali		Eshowe		Tongaat	
	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students
101-1000	0	0	14	16	22	30	28	21
2001-3000	7	12	0	0	0	0	0	0
3001-4000	10	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
5001-6000	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6001-7000	12	15	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table one reveals that all the teachers and students from Imbali, Eshowe and Tongaat regions came from schools charging fees in the category R100-R1000 per year. Fifteen per cent of the students from multi-racial schools paid fees between R6001-R7000, with twelve per cent of their teachers reporting that their students paid the same fee figure per annum (see table one). Despite the fact that some teachers and students reported that their schools charged fees between R100-R1000 a year, the lowest fees were charged by school from Imbali region (ranging from R140-R190), Eshowe region (ranging from R150-R250) and Tongaat region (ranging from R350-R400). These outcomes may have an implication on what regions really need the services of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

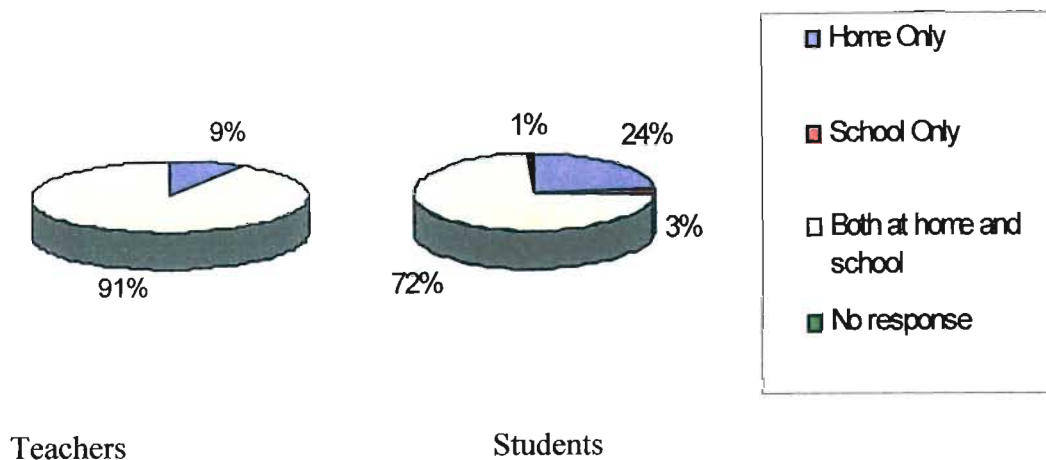


Figure Seven. Responses of students (n=145) and teachers (n=58) on ownership of television sets at home and school.

While numbers alone cannot determine the nature, extent and quality of use, they are indicators of availability. Access is the first step to use (Eric, 1996). One of the things the researcher tried to establish in this study was the ownership of television sets in school and at home (figure seven). Seventy two per cent of the students and 91 per cent of the teachers said that they had television sets both at home and school, 24 per cent of the students and 9 per cent of the teachers own television at home only and 3 per cent of the students had a television at school only and 1 per cent of the students did not respond to the question (figure seven). These findings seem to imply that there is lack of full penetration of television sets in South African homes and schools. This is in line with statistics from the SouthAfrica.info report/South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) (2002) that almost 45 per cent of rural households now have television sets and urban television penetration is now at 84 per cent of all households. Toby Mendel in his study, entitled *Public service broadcasting. A comparative legal survey: South Africa* (2000) reported low rates of television ownership in South African rural areas.

Table Two: Teachers’ responses, according to regions, on the ownership of television sets (n=58).

Place where television is available	Percentage of teachers television ownership per region			
	Durban	Imbali	Eshowe	Tongaat
Home only	0	0	9	0
School only	0	0	0	0
Both home and school	36	14	14	28

Table two indicates that 9 per cent of the participants’ hailing from the Eshowe region did not have television sets at their schools and thus cannot use *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* at school. These findings imply that some schools in Eshowe do not have the necessary resources to enable them to use the programme.

Table Three: Students’ responses, according to regions, on the ownership of television sets (n=145).

Place where television is available	Percentage of Students television ownership per region			
	Durban	Imbali	Eshowe	Tongaat
Home	0	2	19	3
School	0	2	1	1
Both home and school	33	12	10	17
No TV at home & school	0	0	1	0

These results in Table three indicate that multi-racial schools have the infrastructure needed to use *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* at home and at school, but same cannot be said for some of the students from Imbali, Eshowe and Tongaat regions. The Eshowe region is worst hit in so far as availability of television sets in schools is concerned. The above results may be in agreement with Bulbulia's (1998) assertion that access to television, computers and the Internet is largely concentrated in the White, Indian and Coloured groupings.

3.1.3. Summary

This part of the study identified the number, age, gender and television ownership of the teachers and students involved in the focus group interviews. Findings on the age, ownership of television sets and location of schools and fees charged per annum will be integrated with results from the focus group interviews (see chapter three part two) to help unearth if any of these variables had an impact on the utilisation of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Research to determine the television programmes watched, teachers and students perceptions on different aspects of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was therefore undertaken using focus group interviews with teachers and also with students (chapter three part two).

PART TWO

Identification of television programmes watched by matric teachers and students and the usage of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

3.2.1. Introduction

This part of the study was after understanding the complex consumption of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. It looked at the perceptions of matric teachers and students from different regions in KwaZulu-Natal to check whether economic status has certain effects on the interpretation of some events in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Research was undertaken using a number of approaches (see chapter 1 one part two section 1.2) to determine the importance of television in teaching and learning, television programmes generally watched, the usage pattern of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* relevancy to teachers and students, viewers feelings about *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, suggestions for the improvement of the programme and impacts of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* on the community. Results will be presented under the above mentioned areas of the study.

It should be kept in mind that the purpose of this study was not to define in concrete terms the audience constituted by the informants, as it defies definition. Rather, the researcher's aim was to present the information gathered during the thirty-two focus group interviews. The researcher will present the viewing experiences of the informants as they described them. As Ang (1994:110) notes, ethnographic work (in the sense of drawing on what we can perceive and experience in everyday settings), "acquires its critical mark when it functions as a reminder that reality is always more complicated and diversified than our theories can represent, and that there is no such thing as "audience" whose characteristics can be set once and for all".

In this study, the researcher avoided drawing definitive conclusions, as the study was meant to provide a greater depth of understanding of the viewing experiences of the informants, not conclusive answers, which are characteristics of quantitative empirical audience studies, studies which do not reflect that television viewing is an activity subject to human determination (Tager, 1995).

3.2.2. Results and discussion of teachers and students focus groups' interviews

3.2.2.1. Television programmes generally watched

3.2.2.1.1. Programme preferences

As noted earlier (see chapter one section 1.1.4.2. and 1.1.4.3.), audiences do not comprise a vacuum to be passively filled by media messages. Instead, audiences must be perceived as being psychologically active in their use of the media and the way they react to media content. Viewers, listeners and readers, place their own interpretations on media content that are influenced by the social communities to which they belong or with which they identify. Many different meanings can be obtained from the same media output by media consumers who have different backgrounds (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 151; Lunt and Livingstone, 1996; Phillips, 1997; Herrmann, 2000; Gunter, 2000: 45). In other words, viewers' various sociocultural situations (e.g. environmental and political/economic) and different identities (e.g. gender, age, class, race/ethnicity region and others) have a bearing on how they conduct and experience their everyday lives (Morley 1989). This includes what kinds of television programmes they have available and choose to view, how they participate in viewing rituals, and how they interpret their viewing experiences. To understand how television meanings and pleasures are generated and circulated, audience experiences need to be accounted for, and audience voices need to be heard (Buckingham, 1993a; Fisherkeller, 1997).

In this study, teachers' and students' television viewership were determined using the questions: "What kind of television programmes do you generally watch and why?; What educational programmes do you watch and why?; And where do you watch the programmes, at home or at school?" (Appendix B, questions 1 and 2). Results indicated that the most watched programmes amongst the teachers in all regions were news, comedies and soap operas, followed by sport, educational programmes, documentaries and movies. The least watched programmes were *Felicia*¹, watched by one maths teacher from Tongaat; *Take 5*, watched by one science teacher from Eshowe and *Music*, watched by one English teacher from Queensburgh Girls' High School (see Appendix F1).

¹ *Felicia* is a talk show broadcast on Etv. It focuses on discussing issues affecting the South African society.

According to de Beer (1998: 21) and Lull (1990: 36), people watch television to fulfil the following four main kinds of needs: diversion (escape from routine and the burdens of day to day problems, relaxation, fantasy and imagination); personal relationships (companionship and mediated social contacts); personal identity (personal references, values, exploration of reality, role models); and surveillance (need for information, keep up to date, provision of subjects for conversation). Focus group participants in this study support some of these findings. For example, the reasons given by most of the teachers for watching news were because the programmes are informative, they get information on what is happening around them (both locally and internationally) and use some of this information in teaching their students. An exchange between Naicker and Malinga supports these assertions (Tongaat English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). Naicker stated that he watched news because "it's informative [...]," he has "interest in political [...] social [...] things that are happening around" and he watches "to inform the children that are at school" (Tongaat English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). To which Malinga added "I don't miss news, I like to keep abreast with what's going on" (Tongaat English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). Thus, it can be argued that teachers watched news because they value being informed on what is happening around them and internationally. A conviction that only information can help people to understand political and social processes is well expressed also by British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which justifies its news and information services by claiming them to "help people understand national and international events" (BBC, 1996: 3 quoted in Hermes, 1999: 117).

Graber (1988) reported that viewers tune into the news because it enables them to feel that they have discharged their responsibilities as citizens, albeit in a fairly disengaged and painless manner. In terms of influence this would imply that news induces a generalised feeling of belonging and stability, thereby reinforcing the status quo and it can do so without viewers having to consciously assent to any particular position, or make the effort to ingest complex factual information. News reassures viewers that the world is pretty much as it was yesterday. News might be seen as a kind of social palliative, not a guarantee of active citizenship, but a substitute for it (Buckingham, 1999). According to Maria Montessori (1987), the child is born with a universal conquering mind. Maybe people as adults do not have the same appetite for

knowledge as a child, but still want to know about things behind mountains. People want to confirm and widen their cognition's about social and political reality, and news viewing may be regarded as a continuation of the universal conquering mind of the child (Höijer, 1999:184).

Comedies, soaps operas, films, sports, *Felicia* and music programmes were watched for relaxation and to relieve pressure (see Appendix F1). These results are in agreement with the assertion of de Beers (1998: 26), Lull (1990: 36), Kubey and Csikzentmihalyi (1990) and Alasuutari, 1999: 10) that people watch television to escape from routine and to relax. Educational programmes and documentaries were viewed for teachers to get ideas to revise with their students and *Take 5* programme was watched for learning something new (Appendix F1).

Comedies were the most popular programmes amongst the students, with a great majority of the participants reporting that they liked watching them. A number of students from Imbali, Eshowe and Tongaat regions confided that they enjoyed watching news. Several students from the different areas under study reported that they preferred watching sports, dramas and adventure. A few students from multi-racial schools said that they watched movies and music programmes (see Appendix F2). Like the teachers, a great majority of the students who liked watching comedies, drama, sports, adventure, movies, music and soap operas, conveyed that they watched them to relax and news was watched to know what was happening in their surroundings, as evidenced in the following extract from Tongaat English students' focus group interviewees:

Paulsen: Comedy [...] it relieves my stress unlike watching soapies like *Days of Our Lives*

Helena: [...] to be honest, comedy as well, I like news to be informed of what is happening and educational [programmes] if I am behind in notes I will watch it to catch up.

Alisha: Yah, I like comedies and I watch the news as well. I watch the comedies because as he [Paulsen] said to release stress and all the hectic schedules. [...] So comedy is to unwind. The news is to be informed about what is going on lately, current issues (Tongaat English students' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000, Appendix F2).

It has been argued decisively in qualitative (Fisher-Keller, 1997) and quantitative (Lyle and Hoffman, 1972; Moore and Schultz, 1983; Kurdek, 1987; Arnett, 1995) studies, that listening to music and watching television are the coping strategies most commonly used by adolescents and young adults when they are angry, anxious, or unhappy. Reed Larson (1995: 544) found in his study of adolescents' private use of media that

In most cases...teenagers do not feel strongly aroused or captivated by the images they see on TV. In fact, adolescents usually report[ed] feeling vacant during TV viewing... If anything, the comfortable messages of TV are an opportunity to turn off the self.

Thus, it can be inferred that youth generally like watching entertainment programmes because they value the emotional escape those programmes provide.

It is also worth noting that an important aspect of identity formation, and one for which adolescents may especially make use of media, is gender role identity. Adolescents take ideals of what it means to be a man or a woman partly from the media, which presents physical and behavioural gender ideals in images through music, movies (Greenberg *et al.* 1986), television (Brown *et al.*, 1990), and magazines (Evans *et al.*, 1991). Girls who are just beginning to gain sexual and romantic experiences especially are fascinated by media depictions of male-female relationships. Adolescents use the information provided in media to learn sexual and romantic scripts (Brown *et al.*, 1990). For both girls and boys, gender, sexuality and relationships are central to the kind of identity exploration and identity building for which adolescents use media (Arnett, 1995: 522). The present study demonstrates that an English student at Imbali region watched soapies because she learned about love and how to face marriage problems. Lungie remarked: "most of the times I used to watch soapies because [...] [I would] like to know about love and since I am a teenager, [...] when I grow up, I want know how to [...] face marriage problems" (Imbali English students' focus group interview, 15 April 2000).

When asked whether they watched educational programmes, several students revealed that they watched educational programmes and various reasons were given for watching these programmes. Some students from Eshowe and Imbali regions revealed that they

liked watching educational programmes because at times they did not understand what the teacher taught at school, and educational programmes helped them understand. Their views are best explained by Sbusiso, a science student at Imbali region in the following quote: “As Zandile has said [...] if you didn’t understand the teachers in school, the Learning Channel [...] [has] a better way [...] [of] explaining” (Imbali Science students’ focus group interviews, 14 April 2000). Thandeka, a mathematics student at Imbali region said that she watched educational programmes (*Take 5*) to get study tips (Imbali Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 12 April 2000, Appendix F2). Nokuzola, a mathematics student from the same region asserted that she watched educational programmes because she found many things she did not get at school “like experiments in chemistry” (Imbali Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 12 April 2000). Seshmika said that he watched “educational programmes for revision” (Tongaat Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 7 March 2000). Based on the above results, it seems that students from less resourced areas (in terms of learning materials and adequately qualified teachers) utilised educational programmes for revision, getting study tips, to try and understand what was not understood at school and to fill-in details on the subject matter which the teachers did not provide.

On the contrary, most of the Northlands Girls’ High School (well resourced) mathematics students stated that they did not watch educational programmes because they are screened when they are in school. Their views could be said to be best explained by Leigh in the following: “educational programmes, I also don’t watch because I’m never at home when it’s on” (Northlands Girls’ High School Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). Thus, it seems that inappropriate scheduling of educational programmes hindered students’ utilisation.

3.2.2.1.2. Educational programmes watched

On the question assessing the kind of educational programmes watched, results showed that educational programmes watched by teachers were documentaries, *Education Express*, *50/50*, *Liberty Learning Channel*, *a Word or 2*, *Larry King*, *Take 5*, *Planets*, *news*, *Sesame Street* and *Oprah*. The most watched educational programme in all the regions was *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, with documentary programmes being watched in all regions except teachers from Eshowe

region. *Education Express* was watched by teachers from Tongaat, Eshowe and Imbali region, *Take 5* and *a Word or 2* were watched by teachers from Eshowe region, with *50/50* being watched at Tongaat region and *Larry King*, *Planets*, *news*, *Sesame Street* and *Oprah* being watched by teachers from Durban multi-racial schools (see Appendix F1). Teachers watching documentaries claimed that they watch them to get information on nature and history and those who watched *Education Express* do so to learn teaching methods and to see how township people in model C (multi-racial schools) should cope. Almost all the teachers from the four regions said that they watched the educational programmes at home as their syllabus does not allow them to watch educational programmes at school because the syllabus has specific sections to be taught. The following extract from Tongaat English teachers' focus group interviewees could be taken to speak for them all on the issue of educational programmes watched, why they watch them and where they do their viewing:

Govender: I often don't watch educational programmes but I watch especially about the endangered species [...], looking at these aspects that are dealing with the world, share God's live etc. We need to familiate ourselves with nature for example, documentaries I watch to get information.

Eunice: Okay, and where do you watch them, at home or school?

Govender: Mostly at home, it's difficult to watch them at school the teachers are teaching in time and our syllabus does not allow us to because it has specific sections to be taught, but mostly at home.

Eunice: And Lydia, what educational programmes do you watch?

Lydia: Well, apart from the ones in conservation, I like watching the struggles African-Americans suffered in history, World War II and because of time constraints I suppose it is a little limited, I find that during the weekend it's the only time I have to watch the programmes. Because during weekdays you find that not many education programmes are screened in the hour[s] that we may be free.

Eunice: And do you watch at home or school?

Lydia: At home.

Malinga: I try to watch programmes like talk shows, magazine programmes but then once again the time is the restrictive factor, actually there is no time to sit and watch it. But I find that fascinating when they are listen to other people responses to certain pressing problems that they experience in society. And also they, as the other ladies have mentioned, I like about the nature conservation I try to make some time to watch them sometimes with my family and I do it at home.

Naicker: The only programme that I watch is, I don't really know what it's called, it's on Sundays you know, when we have different schools and bringing situations.

Eunice: Which one is that, *Education Express*?

Naicker: Yah, it's an educational programme about different schools, I think last week they had something on [...] having your children moving away from black townships schools, black schools to model C schools and how to expose them out to model C schools and the problems they may face. And that is not the, you know, on a regular basis and as I said we don't have time. But what I do is I catch up [...] [on] whatever is happening in schools. I read the Sunday Times and they have the copy of the on education, that is my progress. Incidentally [if] there is something on *50/50* on Sundays I watch it. So I don't specifically [...] choose the programme (Tongaat English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000).

The above results corroborate findings by Hsun-Fung Kao and Wedman John (1995) in their study of faculty implementation of an educational innovation. They found teachers' working conditions were characterised often by time constraints. The teachers had to attend to various responsibilities such as classroom management, material coverage, administrative duties, professional priorities, and were faced with the difficulty of 'squeezing' the programme into their curriculum daily routines. In particular, the teachers worked with the constraints of 50-minute class periods, which were punctuated with interruptions (a mix of discipline problems and school intercom announcements). The above results seems to imply that purely educational programmes (like *Education Express*, *Take 5* and *a word or 2* were mostly watched by teachers from less resourced schools (Imbali, Eshowe and Tongaat). This could be due to the fact that most of the teachers from these areas are less experienced and qualified compared to the teachers from the resourced schools (multi-racial schools).

Students results on the kind of educational programmes watched showed that educational programmes watched were *Take 5*, *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, *50/50*, *a Word or 2*, *Wildlife* and *Discovery Channel*. The most watched educational programmes, by a great majority of the participants from all the regions were *Take 5* and *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* (see Appendix F2). *Fifty fifty* educational programme was reported to be watched by a biology student from Eshowe region. Sikhile stated that he watched "*Fifty fifty*" (Eshowe Biology students' focus group interviews, 22 February 2000). Seshmika explained that he "like[d] *Take 5* and *a Word or 2*" (Tongaat Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 7 March 2000).

Some science students from New Forest Secondary School said that they watched wildlife programmes. Their views could be taken to be best explained by Kyle in the following line: “Sometimes I might watch wildlife or something” (New Forest Secondary School Science students’ focus group interviews, 23 March 2000). Several students from multi-racial schools indicated that they watched the *Discovery Channel*, as Amarie remarked: “There is one on DSTV at the moment that [I] enjoy watching, The *Discovery Channel*. It’s got everything on from learning to you name it and it’s exciting. I don’t see why you all just don’t watch it” (Queensburgh Girls’ High School English students’ focus group interviews, 9 June 2000).

In a country-wide evaluation of the matric support programmes (*Liberty Learning Channel Programme* and *Take 5* etc.) in South Africa, Research International (1998)² reported that students used the matric programmes to help them with exam preparation tips; for revision; clarifying those sections that were not understood from school classes and covering issues pertaining to the syllabus that were not covered by the teacher. In the present study, these findings were true of some of the students focus group participants in their use of *Take 5* and *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Several students from Grosvenor Boys’ High School, Eshowe and Imbali regions stressed that they watched *Take 5* to get study tips, as verified in the following selection from Sbusiso, a biology student at Grosvenor Boys’ High School:

Well, [...] I watch it [to] learn something new and it’s quite interesting and it keeps you informed as well, as it gives you things like study tips which are helpful. It’s quite a useful programme. It also keeps your attention (Grosvenor Boys’ High School Biology students’ focus group interviews, 6 April 2000).

Further, results showed that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was watched for learning something new, getting a better understanding of school work, revising and for trying to understand what was not understood at school. *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was watched for learning something new and for getting a better understanding of school work by a few students from Imbali and Tongaat region. An exchange between Keshan and Ruveshan supports this point (Tongaat Science students’ focus group interviews, 6 March 2000). Keshan stated “Sometimes you

² It should be noted that this is the only research which briefly looked at the viewership of Liberty Learning Channel Programme the researcher came across. Thus, the reason why the research has been referred to extensively.

learn new things or you get a better understanding of the work that you are doing” (Tongaat Science students’ focus group interviews, 6 March 2000). To which Ruveshan added “Basically if you don’t understand a section and you watch it, you try to understand better” (Tongaat Science students’ focus group interviews, 6 March 2000).

The programme was watched by several students from multi-racial schools (well resourced), Imbali and Tongaat regions (less resourced) for revision and for trying to understand what they (students) did not understand at school. Celeste supported this point when she said: “Yah, sometimes it can be for revision [...] [and] [...] in a class [if] I didn’t understand what he [the teacher] said then I may need help to understand more clearly in a way that the teacher on television understands it” (Port Natal High School Mathematics students’ focus group interview, 5 April 2000). From these results it is evident that some of the students watched *Take 5* and *Liberty Learning Channel* programmes to get study tips, for revision, getting clarification on contents not understood from school classes and learning issues in the syllabus that were not covered by the teachers in their classrooms.

It is worth noting that scholars have found that media consumption can give young people a sense of cohesion with a larger network of peers, “which is united by certain youth-specific values and interests. In a highly mobile society, the media provide common ground for all adolescents...at the same time connect[ing] adolescents ... around the country and even around the world” (Arnett, 1995: 524). In this way, youth can stay in touch with the attitudes, appearances and experiences of people their own age, both through the mediated viewing experience and through discussing what they have watched with peers in their immediate circle. Further research support the importance of this connection by proving that individuals display a preference for television shows that feature characters of their own age group, even when all other aspects of content are controlled (Harwood, 1997). Clearly, youth choose to watch certain programmes not only because they are entertaining but also because it connects them to a larger social network (Powers, 2001: 21-22). The present results also indicated that a great number of the students from all the regions under investigation watched *Take 5* because it was a youth programme, it related to youth situations, had role models, people they could look up to. The following excerpt from

Nomfundo could be taken to speak for them all: "It's [...] because it's a youth programme and it's usually just [...] directed to the youth and you can relate to all the situations that they have. I mean, so it's about education of the youth and other things generally about the youth" (Queensburgh Girls' High School English students' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000).

However, findings also revealed that educational programmes were not watched by a host of students from the well resourced schools as they were not relevant to their lives, were boring and just like the classroom teaching. Kirthanya, a mathematics student at Northland Girls' High School made known that she does not watch educational programmes because "I don't feel them very relevant to my life" (Northland Girls' High School Mathematics students focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). She added that students in her school do not benefit from *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* because what is taught in the programme is basic understanding of the subject and they needed higher-grade "stuff" (Northland Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000, Appendix F2). The best example of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* not being watched because it was boring and just like the classroom teaching was expressed by Sbusiso, when he said:

Most of the educational programmes are quite boring [...] now the new Learning Channel [...] it's just like the classroom, teachers always talking. While the pupils must partake with you. It should be more interesting and more lively (Grosvenor Boys' High School Biology students' focus group interviews, 6 April 2000).

Like the teachers, all the students from the different regions in the study said that they watched the above mentioned programmes at home rather than at school. Research International (1998:1), in their evaluation of the matric support programmes, reported a similar finding. Overall, results indicated that educational programmes were not as popular amongst teachers and students as comedies. Lack of popularity of educational programmes was also reported by Netshitomboni (1999) in a study of the usage of educational programmes in Phalaphala FM radio. It was evident from those results that educational programmes were not popular among both male and female students. These respondents also emphasised the need to listen to purely entertainment programmes as a way of escaping from the pressures of schoolwork (Netshitomboni, 1999: 77).

Further results on television programmes generally watched showed that programmes watched varied from individual to individual. However, it is worth noting that both teachers and students, to some degree, seemed to watch similar programmes. The only difference in the programmes watched was that while comedies were more popular to students, news was the most popular amongst the teachers. Regarding educational programmes *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was the most popular to all participants. However, *Take 5* was equally popular with the students. This may imply that age and the content of the programme influenced the viewing of the programme.

3.2.2. 2. Importance of educational television in teaching and learning

According to Reeves (1998), findings concerning the impact of television in education can be summed up as follows: there is no conclusive evidence that television stultifies the mind. There is no consistent evidence that television increases either hyperactivity in children. There is insufficient evidence to prove that television viewing displaces academic activities such as reading or homework, and thereby has a negative impact on school achievement. Forty years of research shows positive effects on learning from television programmes that are explicitly produced and used for instructional purposes (Dorr, 1992; Seels *et al.*, 1996). Most studies show that there is no significant difference between the grades of students sitting in the conventional classroom and those of off-campus students viewing televised extensions of that classroom (Russell, 1993; Seels *et al.*, 1996). Also, numerous reviews evaluating telecourses suggest that those that are well designed and well-organised are as effective as conventional face-to-face courses in their impact on student learning and on student and faculty satisfaction (Whittington, 1986; Blanchard, 1989; McNabb, 1994; Dubanoski *et al.*, 1999).

In the present study, the significance of educational television or television broadcast-based distance education in teaching and learning was probed using the questions: “In your opinion, does educational television help in learning and teaching?, Do you believe that television broadcast-based distance education could be a suitable way of teaching and learning about the subject?,”³ Do you think television is a useful

³ The asterisk indicates questions not administered to students

teaching tool?, and do you feel educational television like *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* could be a threat to security of your jobs? *” (Appendix B, questions 3, 10 (ii), 12 and 15). From the focus group interviews conducted in this study, it became clear that most of the teachers and students felt that educational television could be useful in teaching and learning (see Appendix F1 and F2). In examining the data gathered from the focus group participants, it was evident that these respondents felt that television broadcast-based education was helpful in teaching and learning because television is liked by children and they recall what they see and hear from it, bringing practicality to learning. Television is a good teaching aid and exposes students and teachers to different ideas and methods of teaching if the presentation style is interesting, but not talk and chalk method. Television is good for revision; Television helps students understand what they did not understand from teachers at school and television offers individual attention. These reasons will be discussed using representative comments from the focus groups.

Television is liked by children and they recall what they see on television

The fact that children like television and recall what they see and hear from television is one of the factors given by some of the participants from the different regions under study for saying that television was helpful in teaching and learning. For example, Viven said that she thought that television education was helpful in teaching and learning because “children love watching television” (Queensburgh Girls’ High School English teachers’ focus group interviews, 9 June 2000). To which her colleague Selvie, added that “[Children] pick up a lot from listening and watching [television] (Queensburgh Girls’ High School English teachers’ focus group interviews, 9 June 2000). Also, Wiseman, an English student at Eshowe stated: “[television is] good because you can see and hear” (Eshowe English students focus group interviews, 23 February 2000).

These results concur with the conclusions of Salomon (1979, 1983), Lange (1987), Bates (1988), and Aniebona (1990:112). These authors reported that television has been effective because it offers maximum impact i.e. engaging the eyes, and ears with sight, sound and motion. Further findings by Lange (1987) and Oliver *et al.* (1994) show that students see televised instruction as familiar, comfortable and pleasant, as

they have grown up with television, using it constantly as both a source of entertainment and information.

Television brings practicality to learning

A great majority of the teachers held that educational television was helpful in teaching and learning as it brought practicality (for example, live theatre and practicals in sciences). Mdluli remarked: “Yes, it can because it brings a lot practicality in the education” (Imbali Mathematics teachers’ focus group interviews, 12 April 2000). Similarly, Shaun said that television was very useful “[for] showing plays like Shakespeare [...] [and] Hamlet. [...] dramatized [ing] [...] [Shakespeare and Hamlet] will certainly help the pupils to understand a play far better” (Westville Boys’ High School English teachers’ focus group interviews, 11 May 2000). These results corroborate similar conclusions by both Bates (1987) and Aniebona (1990), that television can provide concrete physical examples from the real world to represent abstract ideas. Thus, it is argued here that the use of real world examples can enhance students understanding of complex abstract ideas.

Television is a good teaching aid

Some teachers from the different regions under investigation and a host of biology and science students from Imbali region also reported that television was helpful in teaching and learning as it was a good teaching aid. Clarke, a biology teacher at Westville Girls’ High School noted that educational television was a good teaching aid, especially when there were not enough teachers or teachers were under-qualified and there is a shortage of resources (Westville Girls’ High School Biology teachers’ focus group interview, 15 June 2000, see Appendix F1). Also Msomi, a science teacher at Eshowe region had this to say on the above point:

Yes, it is a useful teaching aid for those may be learners who didn’t understand the teacher in class. So, they use television as another teaching aid. [At] some schools we don’t have facilities, those are the facilities used to do those experiments. So, by watching the television some of the learners can get something if those experiments haven’t been done in school (Eshowe Science teachers’ focus group interviews, 24 February 2000).

Similarly, Lindiwe said: “I think it is good because in the television you see them doing this practical not in the theory way like at our school, we are having the

problem of the laboratory” (Imbali Science students’ focus group interviews, 14 April 2000). These results are in accordance with those of Cassier (1962), Schramm (1964:171), Ural (1991:13), and Chunjie and Yuxia (1994). This implies that television education is a good teaching aid especially to schools which are less resourced in terms of availability of teachers and resources.

Television exposes students and teachers to different ideas and methods of teaching

A host of teachers and students from the different regions also reported that educational television was useful in teaching and learning as it exposes students and teachers to different ideas and ways of teaching. The views of these teachers could be said to be best explained by Imbali English teachers’ focus group interviewees in the following quotation:

Lungi: I have gained a lot of ideas and a lot of ways of explaining some of the things to my kids as well, and so I think for the kids too things are clearly explained.

Henry: Yes, I think so, it helps in getting new methods of teaching and also learning new things (Imbali English teachers’ focus group interviews, 15 April 2000).

Similarly, Adhel, an English student at Tongaat region expressed his feelings on the above subject by saying: “Yes, I also think so because in school we are only taught one method, then when we come home and watch a TV there is another method, so we [...] understand it better” (Tongaat English students’ focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). Therefore, the above results imply that educational television is watched by the above students and teachers to learn new ideas on the subject matter and to learn alternative ways of teaching.

Television presentation style is interesting, but not talk and chalk method (Lecture method)

Regarding teaching methods, participants in a qualitative research study of effective televised instruction viewed instructors who varied their presentations with videotapes, demonstrations, guest presenters, class discussions, slides and other instructional techniques more effective than instructors who relied solely on the lecture method (Sebastian, Egan, Welch and Page, 1996 quoted in Loeding and Wynn, 1999). From the focus group interviews conducted in this research, it became

clear that some of the teachers from multi-racial schools and Eshowe region felt that educational television contributed to teaching and learning if the presentation was interesting and not talk and chalk method of teaching (see Appendix F1).

In the same regard, some biology students from Grosvenor Boys' High School indicated that educational television was profitable in teaching and learning, but added that it depended on the format of the programmes. These students added that they liked the format of *Take 5* more than that of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. They claimed that in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, teaching was like in the classroom, teachers always taking one way, while *Take 5* programme was for the youth, with young people in the studio discussing issues related to the youth and young people phoning-in with questions. Sbusiso explained this point best when he said;

As I have mentioned, I watch *Take 5* because [...] I'm able to concentrate as compared to the Learning Channel. I can also learn from the Learning Channel but the difference is I can concentrate much longer on *Take 5* because [...] as I mentioned earlier, the atmosphere. Whereas in the Learning Channel [...] there is only one person talking all the time, I find that after a while my concentration starts to wonder. [...] like *Take 5* is a good show and the atmosphere is quite different from the Learning Channel. It's more exciting because [...] you've got the youth over there, people who are peers, people from the same age group as you. So you feel it should be interesting because they're the same age group. Whereas the one person, I turn in the Learning Channel, I forget it's the Learning Channel because there's an adult talking and I can't relate to him. I just switch it off every time I turn it on because it feels like the business world (Grosvenor Boys' High School Biology students' focus group interviews, 6 April 2000).

The above findings show that the aforementioned participants held that television education was not helpful in teaching and learning if the 'lecture method' of presentation was being used. Although *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* has a phone-in component, it is highly criticised for the use of the 'lecture method' as there is very little involvement of the students (Hyton Appelbaum, personal interview, 10 August 1999, Appendix E). Additionally, the students added that they preferred the presentation format of *Take 5*, a phone-in youth programme hosted by young presenters. This implies that the students liked programmes using a phone-in format and presented by people relevant to their age-group. In his study entitled "*Viewing age: lifespan identity and television viewing choices*" media scholar Jake Harwood

found that “all age groups [view] a television universe in which lead characters of their own age group are over-represented relative to their presence in the population” (Harwood, 1997: 209).

Television is good for revision

Several students from the different regions under study and a few teachers from multi-racial schools also related that educational television was helpful in teaching and learning as far as revision is concerned. Alesha explained that “watching television you [are] more relaxed and you can revise your days work in a relaxed manner” (Tongaat English students’ focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). Also, Nisha said: “as a general revision programme it could be useful but not as the basic teaching tool” (Grosvenor Boys’ High School Biology teachers’ focus group interviews, 6 April 2000).

Television helps students understand what they did not understand from teacher s at school

Educational television was said to be helpful in teaching and learning by a few students from Tongaat and Imbali region as it helped students understand what they did not understand from their teachers at school. Ruveshan, a science student at Tongaat region explained it best when he said: “I think it helps with matric’s class because in school [...] teachers basically push to get through the stuff and we sometimes don’t understand because they do it quite fast. So you can learn at your own pace at home. You can sit and watch it and understand it” (Tongaat Science students’ focus group interviews, 6 March 2000). Similar results were reported in the evaluation of the matric support programme (Research International, 1998).

3.2.2.2.1. Educational television helpfulness in teaching and learning of specific subjects

On the question eliciting teachers’ and students’ responses on whether educational television could be used to teach specific subjects, teachers did not respond to the question as they felt that they would be repeating the same answers they gave in the previous question. However, students responded to the question basing their responses on the four-subject broadcast of *Liberty Life Learning Channel Porgramme*. Results showed that a great majority of the participants’ felt that television broadcast-based

distance education was helpful in teaching and learning in their subject areas (Science, Biology, Mathematics and English, see Appendix F2).

Science and Biology

In science and biology, some of the students were of the opinion that television helps where there are no laboratories. Ryan, a science student at Northwood High School stated:

Science? Definitely yes [...] because when we see something in the classroom it is mainly written in the board like say molecular theories, [...] but when we see them on television, it is usually animated or some sort of graphic. You can see an atom changing colour and the chemical is also animated so you get an idea of what is happening. It helps especially in areas where they don't have science laboratories and they need that specific information (Northwood High School Science students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000).

Also, Zama said that they do not have laboratories at school and on television they "get more information because they do some experiments that they cannot do at school" (Imbali Biology students' focus group interviews, 13 April 2000). Two Biology students at Tongaat region related that educational television was beneficial in teaching and learning biology, but raised the concern that one cannot tell the presenter that he/she had not understood without phoning. Shavin explained this point by saying;

It [educational television] is [helpful] when we have the time to watch it. [...] Only one unfortunate thing about it is that if you don't understand something and you don't make a phone call to them [presenters], [...] then you cannot tell the teacher you don't understand something, that's the only disadvantage (Tongaat Biology students' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000).

Mathematics

Also, television broadcast-based distance education was said to be contributive in teaching and learning by a few mathematics students from Tongaat and one from Imbali region as it gave easy ways of solving problems and showed the methods step by step, which enhanced students understanding. Abdul, a mathematics student at Tongaat region said that educational television helped in teaching mathematics because mathematics "is a subject where there is not only one way [...] of solving problems, but there are other ways as well [...] Like they [presenters on television] show all the easier ways of learning" (Tongaat Mathematics students' focus group

interviews, 7 March 2000). Similarly, Thandeka remarked: “It is useful because as we have seen in the Learning Channel [...] you see every step of the maths” (Imbali Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 12 April 2000).

English

According to Neil Postman (1979), television for a child is pleasant and voluntary. Television’s teaching takes place in the kind of psychologically pleasurable atmosphere that school will perhaps never achieve. In the present study, the above observation was evident from responses given by two English students from Tongaat region. These students stated that educational television assisted in teaching English because it is similar to having a teacher at the comfort of one’s home and one can see the teacher’s facial expressions which help in learning. Alesha explained this point best when she said:

Yes, I think it’s a very good method because it’s like a teacher at home, it’s like you are having the teacher [...] at the comfort of your home. Easy to access and you will be able to see the teachers facial expressions [...] [and] you will be able to learn better (Tongaat English students’ focus group interviews, 9 March 2000).

Fox (1996) also found that a quiet, comfortable home environment was cited by a quarter of respondents as a benefit of watching lecturers on television at home. A greater proportion of females than males considered this an advantage.

Moeti, an English student at Westville Boys’ High School related that television broadcast-based education was useful for teaching and learning English because even through watching comedies, one can hear a word and want to know what the word means (Westville Boys’ High School English student’s focus group interviews, 31 May 2000). The above result seems to suggest that even from watching programmes which are not explicitly educational in nature, one can learn English. However, a few of the focus group participants (students) said that educational television was not helpful in teaching and learning.

3.2.2.2.2. Weaknesses of educational television in teaching and learning

Educational television was said to be unhelpful in teaching and learning for two reasons. Firstly, the presenters of the programmes were said to be too fast in their teaching and it was not possible to tell them to repeat. Secondly, respondents reported that they tended to forget what they learned on television unlike in the classroom where there is face-to-face interaction with the teacher. The above points will be unpacked separately using representative comments from the focus group participants.

Presenters being too fast in their teaching and not possible to tell them to repeat

Bates (1984) observed that broadcasts are ephemeral, cannot be reviewed, are uninterruptible and are presented at the same pace for all students. A student cannot reflect upon an idea or pursue a line of thought during a fast paced programme, without losing the thread of the programme itself. A student cannot go over the same material several times until it is understood. Programme makers have to make assumptions about the 'appropriate' level, but there will always be a majority of the target audience who will not find the pace suitable, in terms of strict learning goals. The continuous and fixed pace of a programme does not allow for individuals to re-work or 'jump' in their thinking to the level which best suits them. This finding was true of two biology students from Eshowe region who suggested that educational television was not profitable for teaching and learning because the presenters were too fast and one could not tell them to repeat. Their views are best explained by Joseph in the following: "Well, I am saying its good but it's not good. [...] they [presenters] are fast, but even when they [...] [teach] you can't tell them [...] 'please rewind you are fast, the students did not hear it'" (Eshowe Biology students' focus group interviews, 22 February 2000).

Students tend to forget what they learn on television unlike in the classroom where there is face-to-face interaction with the teacher.

A few students from Westville Boys' High School related that educational television was not useful in teaching and learning due to the fact that one tends to forget what one learns on television. This is unlike school where there is face-to-face interaction with the teacher, one can ask questions and be answered. An exchange between Nicholas and Michael supports this point (Westville Boys' High School English students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000, Appendix F2). Nicholas stated that

educational television was not helpful because “if you watch something on television and it is like soap, you tend to forget, but [...] at school you actually got the potential to listen and ask questions to the teacher” (Westville Boys’ High School English students’ focus group interviews, 31 May 2000). To which Michael added “Television is not good if you just watch without writing. You can’t learn. You need the face to face person [...]. Better school you can ask questions and be answered” (Westville Boys’ High School English students’ focus group interviews, 31 May 2000).

Similarly, Pierre (1984) reported that children feel that in visual context they miss a great deal and that they have no hold of what they see. The images flash past in swift succession and they claim to remember only what has moved them. Further, Pierre (1984: 313) argues that this conception of memory is not unrelated to their conception of learning. Learning means drumming something into one’s head by repetition so as to be able to reproduce it word for word in the form of a recitation. This idea of learning, based on the mode generally prevailing in education systems, which concentrate on rote learning and verbal exercise, affects their attitude to television as a source of knowledge (Pierre, 1984: 313). It gives children the impression that television with its constant succession of images is not a valid medium for learning purposes.

3.2.2.2.3. Significant suggestions emanating in the previous question

Although all teachers from the different regions had no doubt about educational television potential in teaching and learning, some of the teachers from Tongaat region and Northwood Boys’ High School advised that there was a problem of accessibility to television sets. The opinions of these participants’ could be said to be best illustrated by Subi, a mathematics teacher at Tongaat region: “Yes, television is definitely a useful tool, [...] the problem in our country [is that] [...] less than half the country may be have TV access” (Tongaath Mathematics teachers’ focus group interviews, 7 March 2000: 14). These results seem to corroborate statistics from the SouthAfrica.info report/South African Advertising Research Foundation (2002) that in South Africa, almost 45 per cent of the rural households had television sets and urban television penetration was at 84 per cent of all households.

The South African Institute for Distance Education (1999) reported similar findings based on primary research conducted with 32 schools in three provinces. From these results, it was clear that the majority of schools do not have access to basic technological resources. Of even more concern was that most of these schools do not consider them a priority. Prevailing views expressed by principals were that:

Money should rather be spent on upgrading the school, payment of teachers, upgrading of teachers, purchase of textbooks... not televisions or computers, and insurance but also seeing that there are adequate toilets at the school (SAIDE, 1999).

In the present study, results on focus group participants ownership of television sets at home and school indicated that students and teachers from multi-racial schools (well resourced) had television sets both at home and at school. With the rest of the regions (Tonga, Imbali and Eshowe) having some schools without television sets and some students with no television sets at home. Therefore, lack of access to television sets by some of the participants from less resourced schools is evident.

Further results on access indicated that some of the Tonga English teachers and Werda High School biology teachers focus group interviewees suggested that for television to be more useful in learning and teaching, television sets are needed in each classroom. These teachers' views could be taken to be best explained by Cecelia in the following quotation:

We only have one TV at school and you know we have plenty of classes. You have to book [...] the period that you want to go [to watch]. Sometimes there are weeks that we can hardly get to that [...] TV room. So, that's actually the big problem. If we had a TV in every class that would be wonderful, then you could say "listen now this is an educational programme let's watch it" (Werda High School Biology teachers' Focus group interviews, 15 May 2000).

With regard to utilisation of one television set in the entire school, Kamper (1993:137) reported that the situation in many South African schools is such that it is virtually impossible for learners to gain anything from educational radio and television. It is generally accepted that one television monitor can effectively serve about 15 learners. Normally the number of pupils per class greatly exceeds this number. Organising the use of one set of equipment among a number of teachers can be a complicated issue and is therefore often avoided.

In addition, a problem of the programmes being shown at 10 o'clock in the morning and the fact that they do not coincide with the event of the day i.e. topics being taught, was raised by Naicker, an English teacher at Tongaat region. He added that it was not easy to arrange for students to benefit from educational programmes during the school time because the timetable does not allow for it. Naicker remarked:

The problem is at school in so far as watching programmes. It's [...] related direct to accessibility of pupils to the television at a particular time and now the programme is screened about at about 10 o'clock and now if we tape it then we have to make arrangements now because we have a number of classes. We have to now make arrangements for each class to view it. You see, so it has to like re-organise the entire kind of game to watch the programme. And there are number of programmes I know have been screened but unfortunately we can't [watch] because it doesn't coincide with our [...] event of the day (Tongaats English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000).

These observations have also been made in Britain's secondary schools (Young *et al.* 1980), where timetabling has become more problematic as the schools have grown bigger, and the use of broadcasts has dropped away because of the greater difficulty of fitting them into the timetable.

Regarding the integration of educational television (Technology) into the classroom, African governments, the World Bank, and other donors have begun to recognise that a supply of inputs is not sufficient to ensure educational quality. Inputs must be integrated into the ongoing school life of each school. But the planning and implementation of programmes to improve schooling does not usually consider this point (Heneveld and Craig, 1996). In contrast to the above assertion, Lydia, an English teacher at Tongaat region said that educational television was of benefit to the learners and there was need to incorporate more educational television into their syllabus (Tongaats English teachers' focus group interview, 9 March 2000, see Appendix F1).

3.2.2.2.4. Is educational television threat to teachers' jobs?

On the concept of educational television being a threat to the security of teachers' jobs, most academic staff have little contact with information and communication technologies in their own education. The result breeds fear that the new technology will somehow take over their jobs (Lange, 1987; Nielsen, quoted in Yates and Bradley, 2000). From this fear arises a general opposition to adoption of any technological solution to teaching problems. Some of this fear is irrational, but some is justified. At the same time, most academics are already working quite hard at their current jobs. Without incentives and rewards, using new technology becomes a voluntary overload for the few dedicated idealists who are constantly committed to finding a better way to teach.

In South Africa, educators often express suspicion about the use of the electronic media in education. Sometimes this is because of the way in which the Department of Education and SABC has previously used radio and television in bolstering apartheid education. At other times it is underpinned by a concern that future education planners may intend using the electronic media to supplant teachers and in the name of extending access to educational resources, have the state back off its responsibilities for the development of human resources in education (Kamper, 1993: 136-137; SAIDE/EME discussion document, 1994 quoted in Mpofu, Manhando and Tomaselli, 1996). In stark contrast, results in this present study revealed that the teachers' prevalent feeling were that they were not threatened (see Appendix F1). Reasons given for the above assertion were that educational television can only be used as an aid or supplement to the teacher and the fact that students needed continuous interaction with teachers. The following extract from Tongaat English teachers' focus group interviewees could be taken to speak for them all:

Naicker: I doubt it because like I told you before [...] there must [be] a continuous [interaction between the] teacher and the pupil. Now the television is something which [...] has only one way of interaction [...]

Malinga: I don't think it ought to be a threat because I mean the dynamic situation that takes place in the classroom is unique. It is something that is so different and the child is getting the opportunity to actually express himself. Here [television] it is just a one way, [...] there is no opportunity for him [learner] to offer what he has. In the classroom situation its affordable, so there is no way that it can be a threat.

Lydia: I don't think it can ever replace us. We will still be teaching English 10 years from now [...]. I think it can be used [...] as a media supplementing in the classroom (Tongaat English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000).

Peck and Dorricott (1994) also agreed that although they (aforesaid authors) rely on technology to communicate their messages to their students, technology cannot build relationships with students or meet their emotional needs.

However, two young and inexperienced teachers expressed their fear of being replaced by educational television/technology. Tusani, a science teachers from Imbali strongly felt that educational television could be introduced in the future as a way of reducing teachers as it is cheaper than paying teachers (Imbali Science teachers' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000, see Appendix F1). Vumile argued that educational television would replace teachers in cases where the teachers were not delivering and further suggested that in these cases, students may end up not going to school because they are benefiting a lot from educational television programmes (Eshowe Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 25 February 2000, see Appendix F1). Vumile expressed her fear of being replaced by technology by saying;

In fact it happened to me when I was at Richards Bay Resource Centre and there were computers there [...] with the biology things. I couldn't use the computer to get the information that I wanted and there were kids around me who could use the computer. Then I was threatened because they could see that I know nothing about the technology. Then if the [learners] can be exposed [...] much more to computers and television, definitely I am out (Eshowe Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 25 February 2000).

Similar observations were made amongst teachers at the Mexico Telesecundaria project (Calderoni, 2000) and the El Salvador television project (Jenkins and Sadiman, 2000). The above results seem to negate the possibility of the older teachers being afraid or suspicious of technology, as they all related that they were not threatened by educational television.

3.2.2.3. Usage patterns of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

It is noteworthy that the utilisation of educational programmes, whether minimum or optimum, reflects the perceptions of the user teachers and learners towards the programmes. Whether these programmes are interesting enough, are helpful in the teaching and learning process, etc., are considerations that affect the utilisation pattern (Chaudhary, 1992). It was one of the objectives of the present study to investigate the usage pattern of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Therefore, the viewership pattern of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* were investigated using the questions: “Do you watch or use *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*?, if not, why?, if yes, what forms do you use? (1) Live broadcast (2) Tape recorded video cassettes (3) The *Sowetan* (4) The Internet; How do you use it? To integrate into teaching programmes and built into lessons or to supplement or fill-in activities?; What factor influences your decision to watch or not to watch *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*?; How often or frequent do you watch *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*?; Do you watch it at home or at school?; In general when you watch the programme, is it by yourself, with another person or with other people? Please tell us your relation with these people?; How did you first become aware of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*? Through family discussions, discussions with friends, read about or through promotions?; and Do you know anybody else who watches *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* and do you discuss with them?” (Appendix B, questions 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8). Results from the teachers’ focus group interviews revealed that several participants’ from each region do watch *Liberty Life Learning Channel Programme*, while a great majority of the students reported that they watched the programme. From the present results, it appeared that the programme is watched more by students than by teachers.

3.2.2.3.1. Grounds for watching *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

Reasons given by teachers for watching the programme were to use aspects of the programme in their teaching; to learn different methods of teaching; and the *Sowetan* supplement is used for extracting exercise and test questions. These reasons will be discussed in detail using representative comments taken from the focus group participants.

Teachers watched Liberty Learning Channel Programme in order to use aspects of the programme in their teaching

Based on the focus group interviews, some of the teachers from the different regions under study watched the programme in order to use certain aspects of the programme in their teaching (see Appendix F1). This point is best illustrated by Pillay in the following quotation: “I teach biology and sometimes she [the presenter] does come up with good ideas and aspects, which I can use as well” (Tongaat Biology teachers’ focus group interviews, 8 March 2000). It can be inferred that these teachers watched the programme to gain more knowledge on their subject matter for the benefit of their students.

Teachers watched Liberty Learning Channel Programme to learn different teaching methods

Teachers from Eshowe, Tongaat and Imbali regions watched the programme to learn different teaching methods. An exchange between Anne and Vusi best supports this point (Eshowe Biology Teachers’ focus group interviews, 25 April 2000). Anne stated that she watched the programme for “seeing methods and as well as just picking up some of the details [...] [she] might have forgotten” (Eshowe Biology Teachers’ focus group interviews, 25 April 2000). To which Vusi added “[for] comparing the way you teach and the method you use in class and how another person presents that and especially on TV. And as Anne said, looking at [...] how she [the presenter] makes diagrams, explaining, at times they give you an insight as to applying those things in class” (Eshowe Biology teachers’ focus group interview, 25 April 2000). Similarly, the use of educational television for making teachers aware of teaching and learning innovations, etc., has been reported in the Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET) India and as well as the Doordarshan Kendra, Bombay (Chaudhary, 1992).

Teachers utilised the Sowetan supplement for extracting exercises and test questions

Some of the teachers from Eshowe and Imbali region also revealed that they used the *Sowetan* supplement for extracting exercises and test questions. S’bu said he uses the *Sowetan* supplement for “getting some exercises, more exercises. And also for [...] compiling my tests I [...] take some of the questions from the *Sowetan*” (Imbali Mathematics teachers’ focus group interview, 12 April 2000). Also, Bhengu said he

gave the students “problems from the textbooks but most of them are not challenging enough, so I end up using this supplementary materials from newspapers like the *Sowetan*” (Eshowe Science teachers’ focus group interviews, 24 February 2000).

From the above results, it appears that some teachers from Tongaat, Eshowe and Imbali region utilised *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* to learn new ideas, teaching methods and to get exercise and test questions for their students. While some of the teachers from well-resourced schools utilised the programme just to learn new ideas. Students gave a number of grounds why they watched *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

3.2.2.3.2. Students’ grounds for watching *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

Reasons given by students for watching the programme were: to learn something new and for revision; to see different ways of explaining the same thing; to reinforce or enrich what was learned at school; and to get study tips (Appendix F2). These grounds will be unpacked using representative comments from the focus group participants.

Students watch Liberty Learning Channel Programme to learn something new and to revise

A host of students from Eshowe, Imbali and Tongaat regions stated that they watched the programme or used the supplement to learn something new and for revision. A reason also advanced by several students from Grosvenor Boys’ High School, Port Natal High School and biology students from Tongaat region (see Appendix F2). Vusi illustrated this by contending that “at first [...] [he] thought it was going to be a revision [...] [and] realised that it was not only [for] revision but also [to] learn something new” (Imbali Biology students’ focus group interviews, 13 April 2000). Revision was also a reason given by several students from Queensburgh Girls’ High School and New Forest Secondary School for watching the programme. An exchange between Michelle and Samantha best supports this point (Queensburgh Girls’ High School English students’ focus group interviews, 9 June 2000, Appendix F2). Michelle said that she used the programme “To revise” (Queensburgh Girls’ High School English students’ focus group interviews, 9 June 2000). To which Samantha added “for us it will be revising but for those people who don’t get the extra stuff, it

will be the first time they're taught. So, to them it's [to learn] something new (Queensburgh Girls' High School English students' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000).

Research International (1998) also reported similar findings on the utilisation of the matric support programmes for exam preparation. The above results show that some students from some of the well resourced schools and from less resourced school used the programme for revision and to learn something new.

Students watched Liberty Learning Channel Programme to see different ways of explaining the same thing

Some students from Queensburgh Girls' High School, Imbali and Tongaat regions related that they watched *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* to see different ways of explaining the same thing, a point also put forward as one of the factors which influenced Zandile, a science student at Imbali region to watch the programme (Imbali Science students' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000). This point is best supported by Nomfundo when she said;

The thing is with English you always learn something new because everyone's got a different perspective nothing is right and nothing wrong.[...] so, if someone looks at it in a different way and someone else tells you a different way, you learn something new from that (Queensburgh Girls' High School English students' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000).

These results corroborate the conclusions of Clarke (1996, see Appendix D), principal of Park Town Boys' High School, Johannesburg, that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* presenters showed many different aspects of the same work and this gave their pupils different perspectives and experiences which are good for their learning.

Students watched Liberty Learning Channel programme to reinforce or enrich what they learned at school

The programme was watched for reinforcement or enrichment by Kevin, a mathematics student at Tongaat region. Kevin said: "It's more to supplement so that you have a better knowledge of what you learned at school" (Tongaat Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 7 March 2000). These results are in agreement with findings by Dieuzeide (1962) who reported that enrichment broadcast has been

successfully undertaken in many places throughout the world and that they make qualitative improvement in teaching and learning.

Students watched Liberty Learning Channel Programme to get study tips

Another reason given for watching the programme by a science student at Eshowe region was that he watched the programme to get study tips, as made clear in the following line by Biyela: “May be for study tips and to learn something new” (Eshowe Science students’ focus group interviews, 23 February 2000). Research International (1998) reported similar results.

However, some of the focus group participants related that they did not watch *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Several reasons were offered for not watching the programme.

3.2.2.3.3. Participants’ reasons for not watching *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

Reasons given for not watching the programme were as follows: inappropriate time slot; lack of electricity and vandalism; no time to watch the programme; lack of exposure to the programme; the programme’s way of teaching being perceived as no different from the classroom; presenters’ ways of addressing students like children; some teachers having adequate teaching resources from other sources; the perception that the programme is targeted to disadvantaged students; the programme being thought to be boring; and most of the programmes not coinciding with subjects or sections being done in the classroom and the fact that teachers had no time to integrate the programme in the classroom. These issues will be discussed separately in detail using representative comments from the focus group participants.

Inappropriate time slot

Rigidly imposed broadcast schedules pose difficulties for the use of educational programmes in the classroom (Bates, 1986). Air-time, particularly at peak hours, has become scarcer, with pressure from professional broadcasters to move educational programmes to times that are inconvenient for students, leaving peak times for general broadcasting. Several authors (Dieuzeide, 1962; Bates, 1984; Mayo, 1989; Souchon, 1984) argued that educational broadcasting could not be effective if it has

limited access to wavebands and /or airtime. In this study, it was clear that one of the major causes for most respondents not to watch the programme was the inappropriate time slot. A factor also said to influence the decision not to watch the programme by several teachers and a great majority of the students from the different areas under investigation (see Appendix F1 & F2). This is because most of the teachers/students are at school during weekdays and in funerals or weddings on Saturdays. An exchange between S'bu and Mdluli supports this point best (Imbali Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 12 April 2000). S'bu stated he watched "sometimes I like the ones, which are played on Saturdays in the morning, not always. The problem is [...] the Liberty Life Channel, it's the time that is very inconsiderable [...] if I am not in town, I have attended funerals, weddings [...] it's a very awkward time for me" (Imbali Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 12 April 2000). To which Mdluli added "It used to be on time as if it's the only time that they have during the day, we are at school" (Imbali Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 12 April 2000).

Inappropriate time slot for educational programmes was also noted by Dr. Aucamp as one of the main problems that the SABC education division faces (Mpofu *et al.*, 1996: 285; Kwape, 2000). Similarly, the problem of inappropriate time slots for educational programmes has also been reported at the British Open University (Kirkwood, 1990; Fox, 1996) as well as in the use of educational television by West Australian secondary schools (Oliver, Grant and Younger, 1994: 35).

Lack of electricity and vandalism

It is noteworthy that in South Africa, electrification has reached about 80 per cent of the South African population (SouthAfrica.info report/SAARF, 2002). In the present study, it was revealed that lack of electricity (and vandalism where electricity is available) was one of the factors why the programme was not watched or influenced the decision not to watch the programme. Anne stated that one of the reasons why the programme is not watched at school was due to lack of electricity in all the classrooms and vandalism where electricity is available (Imbali Biology Teachers' focus group interviews, 13 April 2000). Lungie related that her decision not to watch the programme was due to lack of electricity. She expressed herself as follows: "I am living with my granny. Sometimes she fails to pay the electricity [bills] so then we are

lighting candles and then I don't get a chance of watching it [the programme]" (Imbali English students' focus group interviews, 15 April 2000).

These results are complemented by findings of the KwaZulu-Natal department of education (Bisetty, 2003) in their investigation into why more than 100 Durban schools whose water and electricity supplies were disconnected had not serviced their debt. The department reported that investigations showed the reasons in most of these cases was illegal electricity connections and theft of water from schools (Bisetty, 2003).

No time to watch the programme

Lack of time for watching the programme was mentioned by some of the teachers from Werda High School (multi-racial), Imbali and Eshowe region as one of the factors why they did not watch *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. These teachers revealed that they had no time to watch the programme because of not knowing the time of broadcast, together with school and family commitments. When they had the time, then the programme was not on air. Cecelia noted that she did not watch the programme because "I don't have the time and if [...] I have the time then this programme isn't on. You know I don't have this very schedule, I've got this very large family that I have to keep on the go" (Werda High School Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 15 May 2000).

A number of students from New Forest Secondary School, Imbali and Tongaat region advised that they did not watch the programme as they had no time to watch it. An exchange between Sunera and Venessa supports this point best (Tongaats Biology students' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000). Sunera stated: "I have no time to watch it because every time they have it, [I] am at school or taking extra classes" (Tongaats Biology students' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000). To which Venessa added "right now [...] I have tuitions on Saturdays there is not time to watch it" (Tongaats Biology students' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000).

These results imply that the "everyday life" as defined by Mackay (1997) as being concerned with "the unpredictable, the improvised and with the routine activities and control of ordinary people as they go about their day-to-day lives" (Mackay, 1997: 7)

affected the viewing of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Lack of time due to teachers being at school and family commitments, students being at school and going for tuition are some of the routine activities that hindered them from watching the programme.

Lack of exposure to the programme

Lack of exposure to the programme was one of the factors which influenced some of the participants' decision not to watch *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Some teachers from Imbali and Eshowe region told the researcher that they did not watch the programme because they were not exposed to the programme. Zama stated: "Yah, may be I saw it at one time [...] not that I don't watch it at all. It is only that I watch without knowing what it is" (Eshowe Biology teachers' focus group interview, 25 February 2000). A similar response was given by some students from New Forest Secondary School, Tongaat, Eshowe and Imbali region. For example, Slindile, an English student from Imbali region said that he did not watch the programme because "I didn't know about it" (Imbali English students' focus group interviews, 15 April 2000). Also, Khelekani stated: "I want to say, I don't think I have heard of it" (Eshowe English students' focus group interview, 23 February 2000). These results are in agreement with findings by Research International (1998: 41) who found that students from Durban and the Cape showed a below average level of awareness of the *Sowetan* supplement.

Lack of exposure was also shown by several teachers from Imbali region, Northlands Girls' High School (multi-racial) and several students from Northwood High School and Eshowe English students when they related that they were not aware of the times of the broadcast. Morris said "I have watched it but again, I have no idea when it happens, what day of the week, what time of the week, what he presents or anything about it" (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). Professor, an English student at Eshowe stated: "I hear about it but wasn't aware of the times" (Eshowe English students focus group interviews, 23 February 2000).

A closely related point to the above was raised by Chetty, a science teacher at Tongaat region. Chetty proposed that Liberty Learning Channel should provide detailed

information about the programme in the television guide. He further added that, “If they put in details [such as] what topic, what practical work they will be dealing with, [teachers] will gonna make use of it” (Tonga Science teachers’ focus group interviews, 8 March 2000). Similarly, Roger Cope (1996, see Appendix D), principal, Milnerton High School in a letter to William Smith suggested that it was essential that schools be informed well in advance the topics to be televised and times. He argued that this information would be helpful in planning and optimum use of the programmes. He further argued that due to lack of the above information in his school, no planned use of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was scheduled.

The programmes way of teaching being perceived as no different from the classroom

Northwood High School science teachers related that they did not watch *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* because it was very much like classroom work and what is taught in the programme are things they know. Dhooth explained this point best when he said: “Most of the things I know, I teach it, so I find it very boring” (Northwood High School teachers’ focus group interviews, 8 June 2000). A closely related point to the above was raised by some students from Northlands Girls’ High School. These students related that they did not watch the programme because they did not want to go back to school when they go home or rather watch educational programmes, but relax by watching television or doing other things (Northlands Girls’ High School Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). An exchange between Staci and Sandra supports this point (Northlands Girls’ High School Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). Staci stated that she does not watch the programme

Because when I watch TV, I don’t want to go back to school. Especially when I’m at home there are so many other things to do. I go home to be away from school, the kitchen is there, the phone is there and the TV is there and there are many other things on TV (Northlands Girls’ High School Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

To which Sandra added

No, I don’t watch [the programme] [...] we spend like six hours at school. I wanna go home and we still have to do homework, that takes like 2 hours or

something and then I don't wanna go home and have another hour of school basically. I like to go home, eat, watch some TV, sleep may be, not watch the Learning Channel (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

These results corroborate the conclusions of Netshitomboni (1999) that educational programmes on Phalaphala FM radio were not popular among the respondents probably due to the fact that they spend five days per week at school, and as such they would like to have a break from purely educational materials.

Presenters' ways of addressing students like children

A mathematics student from Northland Girls' High School did not watch the programme because of the manner the presenter addressed them. Leigh felt that the mathematics presenter undermined them by the way she addressed them as children. Leigh said: "I don't watch it either. [...] if I switch on the channel, as soon as I see the woman [maths presenter], I am like anti-watching because "do you see the way that she talks?" Its like she's talking to children and I just feel it a bit undermining" (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

In this regard, Robinson *et al.* (1982) argues that the voice is not a "neutral" medium for the message. It is in part the message itself (think, for example, of descriptions of voice tones such as 'sharp', 'gentle', 'irritated', etc.). These authors further suggest that presenters might like to consider how they sound on the telephone and also what attitude they are conveying by their tone of voice, especially in those important first few minutes of a conversation. These authors added that by the tone of voice alone, one can either close down or open up the opportunity for a student to express a misunderstanding or problem, either about a particular part of the course material or study in general.

Some teachers have adequate teaching resources from other sources

A few teachers from Westville Boys' High School and Eshowe region related that they did not watch *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* because they had enough teaching materials from other sources. The following conversation with an English teacher from Eshowe region could be taken to express these teachers' opinions:

Dumisile: I have never failed to give materials to my learners. I never thought that I will need something to supplement my teaching. I go to in-service training courses [and] then I come back with enough material to give my children. So, I never thought I need more than that, more than what I have.

Eunice: Okay. So, you do not see the need of using it? You have enough?

Dumisile: I have enough. I am not sure about the other people, I am not talking on behalf of the school (Eshowe English teachers' focus group interviews, 25 February 2000).

The perception that the programme is targeted at disadvantaged students

A teacher from a well resourced school related that he did not watch the programme because he held the view that it was directed to disadvantaged students. Shaun said:

I think it's a perception that I have, maybe it's misguided that this channel is directed at compensating disadvantaged students for you know, their disadvantages in the past, that inadequately resourced schools in terms of infrastructure and also in terms of qualifications [...] And you know I am from a more privileged environment and the pupils I teach also are from that sort of background (Westville Boys' High School English teachers' focus group interviews, 11 May 2000).

The programme is thought to be boring.

A number of students from Multi-racial schools and English students from Eshowe region revealed that they did not watch the programme because it was very boring. Michael explained this point best when he said: "I find it very boring" (Westville Boys' High School English students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000).

Most of the programme content not coinciding with subjects or sections being done in the classroom, and teachers not having time to integrate the programme in the classroom

Several teachers from the different regions under study related that they did not watch the programme because most of the programme contents did not coincide with subjects or sections being done in the classroom at that moment and the fact that teachers had no time to integrate the programme into the classroom. An exchange between Padayachee and Chetty supports this point best (Tongaat Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000). Padayachee stated that he does not watch the programme

Because the programme is broadcast during school time. We have periods and most of the programmes do not coincide with my subject. And if it coincides they are not doing the section I am going to do [...] [and] there is no time which we can use it, we are required to finish the syllabus (Tonga Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000).

To which Chetty added "as Padayachee was saying [...] it is a problem in that it doesn't go inside with the periods [...] I might have physical science in the afternoon and this programme is screened at 10:00 in the morning" (Tonga Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000).

With regard to the integration of the programmes into the classroom, Hsun-Fung and Wedman (1995) in an implementation of an educational innovation in American schools, reported that the school culture, with its strong emphasis on students' academic achievement, did not give teachers reasons to implement a programme which was perceived as marginally relevant to academic achievement.

Focus group participants were also interrogated on the kind of texts of *Liberty Learning Channel Programmes* they utilised. The kind of texts utilised by the participants will be discussed under the heading media forms utilised.

3.2.2.3.4. Media forms utilised

It should be noted that the national capacity to consume mediated messages is determined by three attributes of the potential audience: residence, cash and literacy. The initial obstacle is sheer physical access, where people live, in transport, poor land usually determines whether they are reached by the media products. The question of economic access arises. The mass media usually prosper only where a large number of people have at least small amounts of surplus cash, enough left over from the requirements of daily bread to buy a newspaper, a cinema ticket, a radio etc. (Lerner, 1958: 252). Some of the above arguments are true of my focus group participants utilisation of the different media texts of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. In this study, findings showed that the live broadcast was the most used form of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* by the majority of the teachers and students from different regions under study. Followed by the *Sowetan* supplement, with video cassette being used by a few and the web-site not being used by any of the participants (see Appendix F1 & F2). Reasons for or not utilising the media forms will

be discussed under the different media used by Liberty Learning Channel: Live broadcast; Internet; *Sowetan* supplement and video cassettes.

3.2.2.3.4.1. The live broadcast

As noted earlier, the live broadcast was the most used text of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* by the majority of the participants. These participants utilised the television live broadcast most because they had no access to the Internet and the *Sowetan* newspaper (see Appendix F1 & F2). The best example of this theme was expressed by Pamaloshni when she explained why she only used the live broadcast: “not all of us have access to the Internet and the *Sowetan*. So [...] most of us are able to watch [...] the live broadcast” (Tongaat English students’ focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). Similarly, Research International (1998: 35) in its evaluation of the matric support programme observed that the media form used most often in their sample for exam preparation was television (76 per cent), followed by the Newspapers (16 per cent).

3.2.2.3. 4. 2. The Internet

As shown earlier, all the focus group participants did not use Liberty Learning Channel Internet materials. Reasons give for not utilising these materials were: Lack of awareness of the existence of Liberty Learning Channel web site and lack of access to computers and computer illiteracy. These points will be discussed below in details.

Lack of awareness of the existence of Liberty Learning Channel web site

Several teachers from multi-racial schools, Tongaat region and a host of students from multi-racial schools related that they did not use Liberty Learning Channel Internet based materials because they were not aware of the Learning Channel Internet site. Govender pointed out “I think I haven’t heard much about the Learning Channel and the Internet” (Tongaat English teachers focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). Kyle said that he did not know the Liberty Learning Channel “Internet site that [he] can go to” (New Forest Secondary School Science students’ focus group interviews, 23 March 2000). Raymond illustrated this point by saying, “I didn’t even know they had a web site” (Northwood High School Science students’ focus group interviews, 31 March 2000).

However, two mathematics students from Northlands Girls' High School said that they used the Internet to do their school projects but did not utilise Liberty Learning Channel Internet materials (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000, see Appendix F2).

It is worthwhile to mention that Northwood High School Science teachers, Westville Girls' High Biology teacher and Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics teachers (well resourced school) reported that they had Internet in their school which students used for their projects or research and did not themselves use the Internet as a teaching aid, but could use it for their personal things (see Appendix F2). Reddy illustrated this point best when she said:

No. I think I would rather leave the Internet with the boys to do their research [...] we have so many classes and give discipline and subject material and I think there is no time to be taking children to the Internet. It would be a personal thing to use the Internet. It wouldn't be as a teaching aid (Northwood High School Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 June 2000).

The above results demonstrate the availability of computers and the Internet in the high cost and well-resourced multi-racial schools.

Lack of access to computers and computer illiteracy

Some students from Port Natal High School, Grosvenor Boys' High School, Tongaat, Imbali and Eshowe regions related that they did not utilise Internet materials from Liberty Learning channel because they had no access to computers and were computer illiterate (see Appendix F2). All Eshowe science students focus group interviewees said that they did not use the Internet materials because they had no computers (Eshowe Science students' focus group interviews, 23 February 2000, Appendix F2). In the same regard, all the teachers forming the Eshowe mathematics focus group interviewees revealed that they had no computers and were computer illiterate, as confirmed in the following quotation:

Myeza: We don't have computers.

Eunice: All of you?

All: Yes.

Zakhele: Let alone do we have computers but most of us [...] are computer illiterate (Eshowe Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 24 February 2000).

Also, Sirietha said that she did not use Liberty Learning Channel Internet based material because “[she did not] know how to use the computer” and “how to get into the Internet” (Port Natal Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 5 April 2000). This lack of availability of information and communication technologies is clearly outlined by Mike Jensen (2002) that South Africa has an Internet utilisation rate of 1 in 15 people. Further, the researcher argues that while a sound framework for harnessing the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) has been established, the reality that vast majority of South Africans have little or no access to ICTs cannot be ignored. The above results give the impression that some students from Tongaat, Eshowe, Imbali and some students from the low cost multi-racial schools do not have computers and are computer illiterate. Similar results are shown for mathematics teachers from Eshowe region.

3.2.2.3.4.3. The *Sowetan* Supplement

From the focus group interviews, the *Sowetan* supplement was the second most used Liberty Learning Channel text. The supplement was utilised by a few teachers from Eshowe and Imbali region for extracting exercise and test questions. S'bu illustrated this point succinctly by saying “in fact I use it for getting some exercise, more exercise. And also for [...] compiling my tests I [...] take some of the questions from the *Sowetan*” (Imbali Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 12 April 2000).

Some biology students from Eshowe claimed that they liked using the *Sowetan* supplement more than they did the other forms. Their causes for liking the supplement included the fact that they did not have a chance to watch the live broadcast because they are at school when it is aired. They further said that they chat as they watch the live broadcast and do not hear everything, and in the *Sowetan* everything is clear and one can follow and can keep the supplement and check or use any other time one wishes. An exchange between Khuliwe and Muziwenlahla supports this point (Eshowe Biology students' focus group interviews, 22 February 2000). Khuliwe stated that she liked using the *Sowetan* supplement more than the other forms of texts because “in school I don't have a chance to watch television [and] At times when you

watching television you chart, you just don't [hear] everything. So, in the *Sowetan* you become more anxious than watching television because everything is clear and you follow" (Eshowe Biology students' focus group interviews, 22 February 2000). To which Muziwenlahla added "in *Sowetan*, it's very clear you can understand it and sometimes you can keep and check it anytime" (Eshowe Biology students' focus group interviews, 22 February 2000).

Further results indicated that the rest of the regions did not use the supplement. Diverse grounds were put forward for not using the *Sowetan* supplement. These includes: the fact that questions contained in the supplement are basic and there is very little challenge for the higher-grade students; lack of awareness of the *Sowetan* supplement; low popularity and circulation of the *Sowetan* newspaper in KwaZulu-Natal area; and participants not buying the *Sowetan* newspaper. These reasons will be discussed further using representative comments from the focus group participants.

Questions contained in the Sowetan supplement are basic and there is very little challenge for the higher-grade students

Questions contained in the *Sowetan* supplement were said to be basic and gave very little challenge to higher-grade students by Clark, a biology teacher at Westville Girls' High School. Clark said that she did not use the supplement because "The questions they ask are really quite basic, it is more like standard grade stuff, there is very little challenging [to] the higher grades" (Westville Girls' High School Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 15 June 2000).

Lack of awareness of the Sowetan supplement

The great majority of teachers from the different regions and several students from multi-racial schools, Imbali and Tongaat regions claimed that they were not exposed to the *Sowetan*. Kathy illustrated this point when she said: "I think just not being aware of that it is in the *Sowetan*" (Queensburgh Girls' High School teachers' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000). To which her colleague Verity, added that "I wasn't aware that there [are] supplements in the *Sowetan*" (Queensburgh Girls' High School teachers' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000). Michael, an English student at Westville Boys' High School said he did not use the supplement because "I haven't

heard about the supplement in the *Sowetan*” (Westville Boys’ High School English students’ focus group interviews, 31 May 2000).

These results corroborates the findings of Research International (1998: 41) that students from Durban and the Cape showed a below average level of awareness of the *Sowetan* educational supplement, *Sowetan* Study Smart Guide and The *Star* education supplement. The reasons for poor awareness level of the *Sowetan* supplement was possibly due to its limited / perceived limited availability in areas outside the Gauteng region and the stereotyping that the paper is for black people of South Africa.

Low popularity and circulation of the Sowetan newspaper in KwaZulu-Natal area

Low popularity and circulation of the *Sowetan* newspaper in KwaZulu-Natal area was cited by a host of students from Queensburgh Girls’ High School, Westville Boys’ High, Eshowe, Tongaat and a few teachers from Northwood High School and Tongaat region for not utilising the *Sowetan* supplement. All the Tongaat biology students’ focus group interviews proved this point when they all said: “No. We have no access to it (*Sowetan*) and it’s not popular” (Tongaats Biology students’ focus group interviews, 8 March 2000). Kubeni said: “*Sowetan* is not a popular publication on our area” (Tongaats Mathematics teachers’ focus group interviews, 7 March 2000). To which Bovey added that: “We don’t get the *Sowetan*, we use newspapers circulated in KwaZulu-Natal. It is very difficult to get Transvaal paper in Natal. That is one of the reasons why we do not use the *Sowetan*” (Northwood High School Science teachers’ focus group interviews, 8 June 2000). These results are similar to those of Research International (1998: 51).

Focus group participants not buying the Sowetan newspaper

Several teachers from Imbali region, Northwood High School, a number of students from multi-racial schools and some mathematics students from Imbali region stated that they do not use the *Sowetan* supplement because they do not buy the *Sowetan* newspaper (see Appendix F1 & F 2). An exchange between Chantel and Celeste clearly supports this point (Port Natal High School Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 5 April 2000). Chantel stated she watched “the live broadcast sometimes before the exams [...] [and that] question papers come into the usual newspapers on Tuesdays, but we don’t buy the *Sowetan*” (Port Natal High School Mathematics

students' focus group interviews, 5 April 2000). To which Celeste added "I don't actually buy the *Sowetan*. So I watch it live" (Port Natal High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 5 April 2000).

3.2.2.3.4.4. Videocassettes

Videocassettes bought from Liberty Learning Channel were utilised by Bongiwe, a science teacher from Imbali region. Bongiwe related that she sometimes uses

Will Smith cassettes that are in my school. For instance when I am teaching about [...] equations of motion, [...] we watch his [Liberty Learning Channel] video first, then they can know [...] [what is a] trolley [...] what is a ticker timer, [...] what [...] we mean by the paper tips [...] then I [...] explain from [...] video now for the second time (Imbali Science teachers' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000).

The rest of the participants from the different regions did not mention having used video cassettes from *Liberty Learning Channel*. However, a willingness to use the *Sowetan* and to tape-record the live broadcast for later use was expressed by Lydia, an English teacher from Tongaat region. Lydia said: "now because I know about the *Sowetan* may be I can ask the school to actually subscribe, so that we get a copy [...] every week" (Tongaat English teachers' focus group interview, 9 March 2000). Lydia again

And more importantly I think the fact that we are not sure what subject is being screened on what day and what aspects, does not work in our favour either. If we had some idea of what was going to be screened at least a week ahead we could actually plan to set our tapes and tape it at that time" (Tongaat English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000).

The above quotation revealed that one of teachers stated that since she now knew about the *Sowetan*, she would ask the school to subscribe and further said that if they knew what was to be screened and what aspects they would teach, they would set their tape recorders and tape the programmes.

After establishing the media forms utilised, the present study also embarked on establishing the focus groups participants' frequency of using *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, where the viewing or use of the programme took place, with whom the participants viewed or used the programme with, participants knowledge of

anybody else who used *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* and if the participants discussed what they viewed on the programme with these people. These issues will be unpacked using representative comments from the focus group participants.

Focus groups' participants' frequency of using Liberty Learning Channel Programme, place of viewing, and with whom they viewed or used the programme with

On the question seeking to establish teachers' and students' opinions on how often they watched *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, results indicated that a great majority of the participants' watched the programme sparingly. Teachers described their frequency of viewing with phrases like "once or twice a week", "once or twice during the holidays", "when I find it I watch it if it is relevant", "through flipping channels because I don't know when its on", "not often because I am not sure of the time of broadcast", "when I get a chance", "once or twice a year", "once a month," "on weekends" and the list is endless (see Appendix F1). Students described their frequency of viewing with phrases like "once or twice a week", "once a week on Saturdays", "once or twice during exam times", "three times a month", "six times per year", "by accident", "when they have time", and "watch during school holiday" (see Appendix F2).

The great majority of the participants related that they watched the programme at home and by themselves (see Appendix F1 and F2). These results are complemented by findings of Research International (1998: 1). These results could also be said to be in agreement with assumptions from the South African Department of Education (1996: 10-11, 26) that in 1996 and possibly 1997, for the most part the educational programmes broadcast by the SABC would be accessed by learners and educators directly in their homes or the equivalent and should not rely for their effectiveness, on equipment in schools or on mediation by a teachers or a recording device as there will not be equipment available in schools or community centres. It should be noted that the situation is much the same, as no substantial changes have been made in provision of receiving equipments, as some schools still do not have television sets (Accenture, Markle and UNDP, 2001).

On the contrary, one science teacher from Imbali region reported the use of tape recorded cassettes from Liberty Learning Channel at school, as Bongiwe asserted in the following:

Bongiwe: Sometimes I do use Will Smith [Liberty Learning Channel] cassettes that are in my school. For instance when I am teaching about the [...] equations of motion [...].

Eunice: Okay, and you do it at school, and with your learners of course.

Bongiwe: Yah (Imbali Science teachers' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000).

While Tusani, another science teacher from Imbali reported that he used the *Sowetan* supplement at school and at home. Tusani commented:

Eunice: Okay, you use the *Sowetan* at home or school?

Tusani: Even in school so as to encourages the pupils to use it (Imbali Science teachers' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000).

Similarly, Slindile said: "sometimes at school when we like have free lessons and at home when I study" (Imbali English students' focus group interviews, 15 April 2000).

Several students from the different areas under study also told that they watched the programme with parents and siblings or family. Nene noted that he reads the *Sowetan* supplement "sometimes [...] with his brother" (Imbali Biology students' focus group interviews, 13 April 2000). Also, Sbusiso said when he is viewing "There's usually my family around" (Grosvenor Boys' High School Biology students' focus group interviews, 6 April 2000).

It should be noted that television is a medium that maintains ties with family, and with the security they may offer. Watching television with family members remains quite common in adolescence, and this situation may allow teenagers a valuable opportunity to be in the presence of parents without being required to create meaningful conversation, as suggested by Larson (1995).

Several teachers from the different regions under investigation reported viewing with children. An exchange between Lydia and Govender supports this point (Tongaat English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). Lydia stated she views the

programme “Sometimes with my daughter” (Tongaat English teachers’ focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). To which Govender added “As I said, I’ve got my son and most of the time I watch with him” (Tongaat English teachers’ focus group interviews, 9 March 2000).

Viewing with friends was related by a few students from Tongaat and Imbali region. Adhel, an English student at Tongaat region illustrated this point best when he said he watched: “sometimes with friends” (Tongaat English students’ focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). A significant point raised by Research International (1998: 4) on watching programmes with families or friends was that there is a certain level of distraction and perhaps less concentration on the show than if it was watched alone or at school.

The use of the *Sowetan* supplement with classmates was reported by an English student at Imbali region. Slindile note that she uses the *Sowetan* supplement at school with her classmates during free lessons (Imbali English students’ focus group interviews, 15 April 2000).

Focus group participants’ knowledge of anybody else who used Liberty Learning Channel Programme and whether they discussed what they viewed on the programme

On the item interrogating participants’ views on whether they knew anybody else who watched the programme, results indicated that most of the participants from the different regions did not know anybody else who watched *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* (see Appendix F1 & F2). However, several teachers from the different regions claimed that they knew their pupils used *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Shaun expressed this point succinctly:

What I know is that 2 years ago, the biology teacher in the school taped the biology programmes and she showed them during class to the pupils. And I know my son changed from science to biology in the second term of that year. And she lent him the tapes to watch to catch up on what he had missed (Westville Boys’ High School English teachers’ focus group interviews, 11 May 2000).

The above quote shows not only that these teachers knew a few pupils who watch the programme, but also the extra mile teachers go to have the programme taped for their students. Another point arising from the above quotation was that this teacher knew that his son watched the programme, a point also raised by Selvie. Selvie explained this point by saying "My daughter, my son" (Queensburgh Girls' High School English teachers focus group interviews, 9 June 2000).

Some teachers from Tongaat, Imbali and Eshowe region pointed out that their fellow teachers and subject advisors watched the programme. Kubeni said: "I don't know except my fellow mathematics teacher" (Tongaat Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 7 March 2000). In similar vein, Bongiwe, a science teacher at Imbali region said:

I've got some other colleagues who are in Durban, and the one of our subject advisors who was around here in Pietermaritzburg at that time, he is still also using this Learning Channel for more or new theories in the teaching of science (Imbali Science teachers' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000).

Roshni, a maths teacher in Northland Girls' High School related that she knew her former house-helper used to watch the programme. Roshni stated: "I actually used to have a lady that used to come and help me on a Saturday morning. And she was still going to school and she often used to say that she actually sits down and watches it [*Liberty Learning Channel Programme*]" (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics teachers' focus group interview, 23 May 2000). Also Bovey, a science teacher at Northwood High School said that he knew some people who attended church service with him, who watched the programme (Northwood High School Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 June 2000). These results imply that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* is also watched by people who are not part of the target audience.

Several students from the different areas under study related that their friends watched the programme. An exchange between Helena and Reddy supports this point best (Tongaat English students' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). Helena stated: "I don't know who else watches it except some of my friends at school" (Tongaat English students' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). To which Reddy added

“Many of my friends do watch it” (Tongaat English students’ focus group interviews, 9 March 2000).

A large number of students from Queensburgh Girls’ High School, Eshowe, Tongaat and Imbali regions claimed that their classmates watched the programme. Thandeka explained that she knew one of her classmates watched the programme (Imbali Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 12 April 2000, see Appendix F2). Keshan said: “There are a few people in the class that watch it” (Tongaat Science students’ focus group interviews, 6 March 2000). In similar vein, Khelekani asserted “my classmates” (Eshowe Biology students’ focus group interviews, 22 February 2000).

A host of students from Grosvenor Boys’ High School, Northwood High School, Eshowe and Tongaat region said that they knew that their cousins watched the programme. Their views could be said to be best explained by Kapil, a science student at Northwood High. Kapil said: “Yes. One of my cousins used to watch it when he was doing matric” (Northwood High School Science students’ focus group interviews, 31 May 2000).

A number of students from Imbali region informed that their brothers watched the programme. An exchange between Nene and Jali supports this point best (Imbali Biology students’ focus group interviews, 13 April 2000). Nene stated that he knew his “brother” watched the programme (Imbali Biology students’ focus group interviews, 13 April 2000). To which Jali added “It’s my brother” (Imbali Biology students’ focus group interviews, 13 April 2000). Also, Zakhele, a science student at Imbali region acknowledged that his brother and sister watched *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Zakhele said that he did not know anybody else who watches the programme “except my brother and sister” (Imbali Science students’ focus group interviews, 14 April 2000).

When the participants who related that they knew someone who watched the programme were asked if they discussed what they viewed on the programme with those people, a great majority said that they did not discuss what they watched on the programme (see Appendix F1). Only a few participants reported that they discussed

what they viewed. It is noteworthy that if the ideas presented in a correspondence course are used as a starting point for group discussion, then participants will use and criticise the ideas, not merely reproduce them unthinkingly. In this way educational needs can be met and at the same time minimise the risk of 'banking' and of rote learning (Young *et al.*, 1980: 44). For example, a few biology students from Eshowe and science students from Imbali region reported that they discussed what they watched on the programme with their teachers. Nokukhanya said: "We discuss with our biology teacher" (Eshowe Biology students' focus group interviews, 22 February 2000). In similar vein, Zakhele stated he "Sometimes [...] [I] used to watch it and afterwards when [...] [I] find any difficulties [...] [I would] go to [...] [teachers] and ask them "how do you do this particular problem?" (Imbali Science students' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000).

Some English and science students from Imbali region advised that they discussed what they viewed with their classmates. Lungie explained this point best when she said "I discuss with my [...] classmates only when we've got time" (Imbali English students' focus group interviews, 15 April 2000).

A science student from Tongaat region and a biology student from Imbali region reported that they discussed what they watched from the programme with their brothers. Nene illustrated this point clearly by saying that he discussed what he watched on the programme at home and with his brother (Imbali Biology students' focus group interviews, 13 April 2000, see Appendix F2).

Focus group participants put forward several grounds for not discussing what they viewed on *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. These reasons includes: time constraints and most of the programme contents not coinciding with subjects or sections being taught in the classrooms; students not asking questions and just mentioning what they watched on the programme; and the fact that teachers teach different subjects. These reasons will be discussed in detail using representative comments from the focus group participants.

Time constraint and most of the programme contents not coinciding with subjects or sections being taught in the classrooms

The majority of the teachers from the different regions under investigation said that they did not discuss what they watched on *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* because most of the programme contents were not coinciding with subjects or sections being taught in the classrooms and that the teachers had no time to integrate the programmes into their classrooms. An exchange between Padayachee and Chetty supports this point best (Tonga Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000). Padayachee stated: "We have periods and most of the programmes do not coincide with my subject and if it coincides they are not doing the section I am going to do. [...] there is no time which we can use it [programme], we are required to finish the syllabus" (Tonga Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000). To which Chetty added "as Padayachee was saying [...] it is a problem in that it doesn't go inside with the periods [...]. I might have physical science in the afternoon and this programme is screened at 10: 00 in the morning" (Tonga Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000).

Students not asking questions and just mentioning what they watched on the programme

Reddy, a science teacher from Northwood High School said that she did not discuss with students what they watched on *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* because "they [students] don't ask any questions, they just mention what they saw" (Northwood High School Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 June 2000). So, a lack of asking question on the part of students on what they watched on the programme seems to hinder discussion.

The fact that teachers teach different subjects

Another factor which made teachers not to discuss what they viewed on *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was that teachers taught different subjects. Vusi explained this point clearly when he said: "No. We actually don't discuss because he [the other teacher] teaches science and I am teaching English" (Eshowe English teachers' focus group interviews, 25 February 2000). These results may imply that the subject taught influenced the discussion of issues viewed on *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

Further, the present study also set out to find out how focus group participants got aware of the existence of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

3.2.2.3.5. Participants awareness of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

According to Research International (1998: 47) awareness of the matric support campaign through advertising was low, particularly for *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* (19 per cent of the students having gotten aware of the programme through the advertising campaign) and the *Sowetan* educational Supplement (18 per cent of the students having gotten aware of the supplement through the advertising campaign). This finding was true of the current focus group participants' awareness of the programme through its advertising campaign. Findings showed that most of the participants from the different regions under investigation had become aware of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* by chance through television when changing channels (see Appendix F1 & F2). The above results show clearly that awareness of the programme through advertising was low, as also suggested by Research International (1998: 47).

Other means through which the participants learned about the programme were: television advertisements; newspapers; the Department of Education; William Smith; friends; pupils; siblings; uncle; the teacher; the researcher; grand parents; mother; cousins; and television guide (see Appendix F1 and F2). These means will be discussed separately using representative comments from the focus group participants.

Television advertisements

Several teachers from the different regions under investigation and some students from multi-racial schools, Eshowe and Tongaat regions reported that they learned of the programme through television advertisements (see Appendix F1 & F2). Verity said: "I actually saw it advertised. I think it was on television, then I saw them advertising that the Learning (Channel] will be broadcasting matric support lessons" (Queensburgh Girls' High School English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000). Also, Muziwenlahla informed "I see it advertised on television and selling of the tapes" (Eshowe Biology students' focus group interviews, 22 February 2000).

Newspapers

Newspapers were another means through which a few students from Northwood High School and Imbali region learned about the programme. Lindiwe, a science student at Imbali explained: "I saw it in the *Sowetan*" (Imbali Science students' focus group interview, 14 April 2000). Raees supported this point when he said: "through newspapers and just television" (Northwood High School Science students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000). To which his classmate Kevin, added that he heard of the programme "On television and newspapers" (Northwood High School Science students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000). Several teachers from multiracial schools, Imbali and Tongaat region gave a similar response.

The Department of Education

Bongiwe, a science teacher at Imbali region reported that she heard about the programme through the Department of Education. She related how she got exposed to the programme as follows:

When I was working for Science Education Project, I was working with some schools, then I went to Emnyezaneni. Emnyezaneni was a school under Eskom, it is in Mooi River. So there were these cassettes which were supplied by the department to them [the school], they were bought by Eskom from somewhere. And then they went to the department to ask whether they must give these cassettes to Emnyezaneni. So that [...] was the first time [...] I saw a cassette or I knew that they was something like a Learning Channel (Imbali Science teachers' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000).

William Smith

Two science teachers from Northwood High School brought to light that they learned about the existence of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* through its founder, William Smith. An exchange between Reddy and Bovey supports this point (Northwood High School Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 June 2000). Reddy explained that "I attended William Smiths classes at the Natal University and he mentioned that the Star Schools is going to start a learning channel" (Northwood High School Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 June 2000). To which Bovey added "I also, I know William Smith's winter schools at the University of Natal and he also lectured for the South African Association of teachers in physical science, he used to lecture us. And he told us about it" (Northwood High School Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 June 2000).

Friends

Friends were another channel through which several students from Grosvenor Boys' High School, Eshowe, Imbali and Tongaat regions and an English teacher from Eshowe region learned of the existence of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Thulile said: "I heard of it [the programme] about a week ago from one of my friends at school" (Eshowe English students' focus group interviews, 23 February 2000). Also, Renele said: "I heard about it from a couple of my friends" (Eshowe English students' focus group interviews, 23 February 2000). Vusi stated: "there is one friend of mine, he [...] came to me and said that there is something he wants to watch. So, I said "I don't have a problem". So, that is when I came to know that there is Liberty Life" (Eshowe English teachers' Focus group interviews, 25 February 2000).

Pupils

A mathematics teacher from Tongaat region said that she heard about the programme from her pupils. Reddy expressed this succinctly: "I think one of my pupils mentioned it to me, then I started watching it" (Tongaat Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 7 March 2000).

Siblings

Awareness of the existence of the programme through siblings was reported by a host of students from Imbali, Tongaat and Eshowe regions. Professor, when asked how he became aware of the programme expressed his response as follows: "I became aware of it because [...] my sister who was doing standard ten [...] told me about it" (Eshowe English students' focus group interviews, 23 February 2000). Also, Indrani said: "My brother introduced me to it" (Tongaat English students' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000).

Uncle

Raymond, a science student at Northwood High school made known that he learnt about the programme through his uncle who works with Liberty Life Foundation (Northwood High School Science students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000, Appendix F2).

The teacher

Several students from Imbali, Tongaat and Eshowe regions informed that they became aware of the programme through their teacher. Mbusi said: "I heard it from my teacher, but I was not interested" (Eshowe Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 22 February 2000). In similar vein, Nileshe said: "Through my teacher" (Tongaats Science students' focus group interviews, 6 March 2000).

The researcher

Some students from Eshowe and Imbali regions stated that they heard about the programme from the researcher, as Patricia said: "Today, through you" (Imbali Biology students' focus group interviews, 13 April 2000). Also, Khelekani said: "I heard from you" (Eshowe English students' focus group interviews, 23 February 2000). The above results may imply that Liberty Learning Channel advertising strategy may be ineffective or do not reach some of the less resourced areas.

Grandparents

Awareness of the programme through grandparents was advanced by an English student from Eshowe region and a biology student from Grosvenor Boys' High School. Nomfundo illustrated this point best when she said: "It was my grandparents who told me. They always watch and they want me to watch" (Imbali English students' focus group interviews, 15 February 2000).

Mother and father

A revelation advanced by a biology student at Eshowe region was that she learnt about the programme from her mother. Khuliwe pointed out: "I first hear[d] it from my mother, she told me there is this channel and I finally saw it as I was watching television" (Eshowe Biology students' focus group interviews, 22 February 2000). Lorraine stated that she became aware of the programme through her father. She said: "My father watched it and taught me to watch it" (Tongaats Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 7 March 2000).

Cousins

A number of science students from Imbali and biology students from Eshowe and Tongaat region related that they became aware of the programme through their cousin or cousins. Their views could be said to be best explained by Caleb, a mathematics student at Tongaat region. Caleb told: "My cousins used to watch it in their matric year and they seemed very interested in it. They told me that they kind of benefited from it. So I said "let me just give it a try" and then I saw it. That's the time that I got to know about it in the first place" (Tongaath Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 7 March 2000).

Television guide

A few biology students from Tongaat region revealed that they learnt about the programme from the television guide. Their views are best illustrated in the following quote by Samantha: "I found out through the guide" (Tongaath Biology students' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000).

Another issue examined in this study was the factors which influence the focus group participants in their decision to watch or not watch *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

3.2.2.3.6. Factors that influenced respondents' decision to watch or not watch *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

On the question interrogating participants on the factors that influenced their decision to watch or not to watch *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, various reasons were given which varied from individual to individual. Factors given for the decision to watch the programme were: if the teaching methods and techniques were found to be interesting; for curiosity; if participants had nothing else to do; if there is something they were having difficulties with; if there is something they could pick from the programme; if it is ones subject area; when they do not understand the teacher in the classroom; the presenters vibrant nature and way of presenting the lesson; poor performance at school; presenters jokes and teaching at students level; *Sowetan* supplement could be kept and used whenever one has time; and the person presenting the lesson and the subject being broadcast (see Appendix F2 & F1). These factors will

be unpacked separately using representative comments from the focus group participants.

Teaching methods and techniques were found to be interesting

One of the factors advanced by some students from Port Natal High School, Tongaat, Imbali and a mathematics teacher from Tongaat region was that they were prompted to watch the programme because they found the teaching methods and techniques interesting (see Appendix F1 & F2). Caleb noted that he was influenced to watch the programme “by the methods of how he (William Smith) taught and the examples” (Tongaath Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 7 March 2000). Naresh said: “Initially it was by accident actually and then I found it very interesting especially the teaching methods and techniques” (Tongaath Mathematics teachers’ focus group interviews, 7 March 2000).

Curiosity

Some teachers from Tongaat region and Northland Girls’ High School (multi-racial school) told that curiosity (to see what Liberty Learning Channel are teaching) made them watch the programme, as Lydia, an English teacher at Tongaat region explained: “I have watched it on occasions, mainly its just been curiosity, if there is a programme that is on and I am aware that English is being presented then I sit rather decide to see what it is that she is actually dealing with in that particular day” (Tongaath English teachers’ focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). Similarly Morris said: “if I’ve watched it, it’s the amount of fascination to see what they are going to do” (Northlands Girls’ High School Mathematics teachers’ focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

Participants having nothing else to do

Having nothing else to do was another factor that influenced two science teachers from Tongaat region to watch the programme. One of the teachers added that the reason for watching only when he had nothing else to do was because he didn’t think the programme could be of help to him. The other teacher reported that he would watch if he had nothing to and his mother was not watching *the Bold and the Beautiful* programme (Tongaath Science teachers’ focus group interviews, 8 March

2000, see Appendix F1). This result indicates that there is competition amongst family members of who is to or not watch their favourite programme at certain times.

These results corroborate the conclusions of Hall (1986a: 10) and Schulz (2000:127) that if watching television is a social and even collective practice, it is not a harmonious practice because subjects are positioned in different ways towards the set, they engage in a continuing struggle over programme choice and programme interpretations, styles of viewing and textual pleasure. What kind of viewer they become can be seen as the outcome of this struggle, however, that is never definitive because it can always be contested and subverted. What we call 'viewing habits' are thus not a more or less static set of behaviors inhabited by an individual or group of individuals; rather they are the temporary result of a never-ending, dynamic and conflictual process in which 'the fine-grained inter-relationships between meaning, pleasure, use and choice' are shaped.

If there is something participants were having difficulties with

Another factor which influenced a science teacher and a mathematics student from Tongaat region from viewing the programme was if there was something they were having difficulties with. Chetty explained that "if I watch for a few minutes and I see [...] this might be an interesting way of doing something that I might have had a problem before, then I will watch it" (Tongaat Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000). Similarly, Donnevan said: "If [...] [I am] watching it, [it] will be just because [...] I'm weak in a certain aspect or I'm not sure about something. Just to make sure about certain aspects" (Tongaat Mathematics students' focus group interview, 7 March 2000).

If there is something participants could pick from the programme

Several teachers from Imbali and Eshowe region mentioned that they were prompted to watch the programme if there was something they could pick from it. Msomi articulated that she was influenced to watch the programme "because I want to get more knowledge from them rather than reading books only" (Eshowe Science teachers' focus group interviews, 24 February 2000). Also, two science students from Imbali region related that their decision to watch the programme was persuaded by the reason that they gained more knowledge (Imbali Science students' focus group

interviews, 14 April 2000). In similar manner, Magdalena said: "It's just to get more information, that is all" (Imbali Science students' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000). The above results suggests that some students and teachers from Tongaat, Imbali and Eshowe region watched the programme to learn more on their subject matter.

If it is one's subject area

Clark, a biology teacher at Westville Girls' High School aired that she was influenced to watch the biology programmes because it is her subject. She asserted: "It is a funny kind of feeling you know, I found myself watching it because [...] it is my subject matter that they are taking about" (Westville Girls' High School Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 15 June 2000).

When students do not understand the teacher in the classroom

A factor which influenced a science student at Imbali and a mathematics student at Port Natal High School decision to watch the programme was when they don't understand the teacher at school. Sbusiso commented: "What makes me watch it is may be when I didn't understand the teacher then I have to come to the Learning Channel" (Imbali Science students' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000). Similarly, Chantel said: "The reason I watch it is because sometimes you don't understand the work the teacher gives you in class and if you watch it on TV you are more comfortable at home and you'll understand the work better" (Port Natal High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 5 April 2000).

Research International (1998: 38) also observed that those sections that were not understood from school classes were clarified and understood by watching the relevant programmes on television.

The presenters vibrant nature

A few science students from Tongaat region made the point that they watched the programme because of the presenters vibrant nature. They added that he (probably William Smith the only male presenter) made learning fun or exciting, as demonstrated in the following quote by Seema: "The factors that influence me is his [Smith] vibrant nature and he makes learning fun, certain things you always find very

boring at school but he brings learning to life [...] that's the reason I watch it" (Tonga Science students' focus group interviews, 6 March 2000). Also, William Smith's way of delivering the lesson and the many examples he uses in his teaching influenced some of the above students' decision to watch the programme. Nilesi explained this point best when he said: "I think I watch it because the way he presents the programme is very good and he reinforces all the ideas again and again. So I basically I understand it much more better" (Tonga Science students' focus group interviews, 6 March 2000).

Poor performance at school

Two biology students from Imbali region gave an account that they are forced to watch the programme because of their poor performance at school. Vusi noted that "the first one [thing] that influences me to watch it [the programme] was my poor performance at school" (Imbali Biology students' focus group interviews, 13 April 2000). Similarly, Ncamisile said: "the first time that I got to watch this [...] Learning Channel [was] because one, the poor results [...] and my teacher also advised me to watch this programme. It helped me a lot because I started doing well" (Imbali Biology students' focus group interviews, 13 April 2000).

Presenters' jokes and teaching at students level

A revelation made by a biology student at Tonga region was that her decision to watch the programme is influenced by the way presenters make jokes and teach at their level. She further added that at school the teachers do not joke around and this makes the student afraid even to ask things that she does not understand. Vanessa explained this point succinctly:

What inspires me to watch it whenever I have time is that it's different from the way teachers teach at school. Well, in school we have not stupid but the teacher will not [make] joke[s] around, but with the teacher on the TV is more like informally. They do even joke and the things that we understand he's trying to say. In class we are scared to tell [...] if you don't understand. But in Liberty Life we know what he's gonna say. We understand because he's talking at our level (Tonga Biology students' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000).

Hart Research Associates (1996) also asked 10-to-17 year-olds to mention the elements of a typical good show; the young people's spontaneous responses

emphasised humour as an essential ingredient. Other studies support this finding (Pasquier, 1996; Nikken and van der Voort, 1997; Valkenburg and Jansen, 1999).

The Sowetan supplement could be kept and used whenever one has time

A mathematics student at Imbali region said that his decision to use the *Sowetan* supplement was influenced by the fact that he could keep it and use it whenever he had time. Nene stated that his decision to use the *Sowetan* supplement was influenced by the fact that “you can even [...] [keep] it if you don’t have time to use it and come back and use it. But with the programme you have to have time to sit and concentrate on it” (Imbali Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 12 April 2000). These results corroborate conclusions by Herrmann (2000) that when one reads a book (print material) the pace is theirs, one can read a sentence over and over again, it will always be there, it is material and gives them a feeling of truth and eternity.

The person presenting the lesson and the subject being broadcast

Several science students from Northwood High School conveyed that the person presenting and the subject being broadcast influenced their decision to watch the programme. An exchange between Ryan and Kevin supports this point (Northwood High School Science students’ focus group interviews, 31 May 2000). Ryan said:

It depends on who is lecturing at that specific time and what they are lecturing. Because I mean, I don’t do biology for instance, and the focus on biology or something that I am not doing [...] is of no use to me. So, it is what I am doing and who is lecturing (Northwood High School Science students’ focus group interviews, 31 May 2000).

To which Kevin added “As Ryan has said it depends on the person who is lecturing and the subject your doing in school” (Northwood High School Science students’ focus group interviews, 31 May 2000). The above results imply that the subjects taken by these students’ influence the usage of the programme. The presenter delivering the lesson is also a key factor in deciding whether to watch or not.

Additionally, focus group participants also gave factors that influenced their decision not to watch *Liberty Learning Channel programme*.

3.2.2.3.6.1. Factors influencing participants decisions not to watch *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

Several factors that influenced teachers and students decision not to watch the programme were also given. These factors included: not being at home during the broadcast time; lack of time to watch the programme; mistakes in the subject content; the use of difficult terminologies; very little interaction with learners; having adequate knowledge of the content being taught and methods being used; the pace of teaching; lack of motivation from the department of education; subjects being broadcast; lack of access to television; not wanting to learn when they go home; presenters being old and boring and lack of interest in the programme. The factors will be discussed in details using representative comments from the participants.

Not being at home during the broadcast time

In the home environment, television viewing is shaped by the presence of other established household practices, which structure the day. These activities include sleeping and waking times, meal times, going to and returning from work times and so on (Gunter, 2000:165; 171). In the present study, findings showed that not being at home during the broadcast time was the most prevalent aspect which influenced the participants' decision not watch the programme (see Appendix F1 & F2). Vivien explained this point vividly when she said: "During the week I am not at home, I am quite busy as a working woman. So I wouldn't watch and then on a Saturday it is a quite a busy morning" (Queensburgh Girls' High School teachers' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000).

Lack of time to watch the programme

Some participants from the different regions said that they had no time to watch the programme due to family and school commitments or the television set was being used by other family members to watch their favourite programmes during the time of broadcast of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* (see Appendix F1 & F2). One teacher claimed that she had satellite television and most of the times her kids are watching their cartoon networks, sports or MTV. Another teacher asserted that she would only watch if the mother was not watching *the Bold and the Beautiful* programme. Other participants' claimed that they had a hectic time teaching at school and when they get home they do household chores, mark and prepare school work for

the next day and have no time to sit and watch the programme (see Appendix F1 & F2). Naicker stated:

We have children at home and they have their favourite programmes, and if they are watching the programme you really can't take them off the TV and that is one reason. The other factor is time, and you know with our hectic teaching, we don't have much time. From school, we get home [...] [and] do a few household chores, then we are marking, preparing and that time is being used. [...] we can't really have the time to sit and watch the programme for one hour, there is no time, we would like to (Tongaat English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000).

Similarly, Sirientha asserted: "I've got a lot of sport going on and I'm always busy [...] So I really don't have time [...] I've already had like extra classes, that's all" (Port Natal High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 5 April 2000).

Mistakes in the subject contents

Clark, a biology teacher at Westville Girls' High School related that she is prompted not to watch the programme by the content mistakes made by the biology presenter. Clark explained that she

Get[s] so ticked off when there are inaccuracies. That I think "God! this woman is talking to I don't know how many thousands of kids out there and they tend to take her word as gospel. This is wrong, this is television, it must be correct. And it is wrong and I keep thinking God! Please let somebody fix this". Then I switch it off in disguise (Westville Girls' High School Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 15 June 2000).

Very little interaction with learners

Learning is more effective if, through dialogue between student and teacher, the student can be shown how the new matter he/she is learning relates to what he already knows, and relates to his/her environment (Perraton, 1984). Dialogue has an important checking function: it enables the tutor to check the student's progress, the tutor to check her method of presentation by seeing whether the student understands her, and the student to check the tutor, in case the tutor has actually got things wrong. The strong form of the argument goes much further and claims that, unless there is dialogue, education changes to indoctrination. Dialogue is here seen as a necessary condition of an education which respects the humanity of student and teacher. This view is reinforced in much out-of-school education, where it is clear that the student's

knowledge of the world in which he/she has grown up merits respect and attention along with the tutor's knowledge of her/his own specialism (Perraton, 1984). Unless the tutor has some means of knowing how her students are working, she has no means of knowing how her/his students are working, she/he has no means of helping them and she/he cannot discover how successful are the materials she/he has created and presented. In the present study, very little conversation with the learners and lack of verification to find out if the learner understood what was being discussed was a factor raised by a biology teacher from Tongaat region for not watching the programme. Naidoo said:

She [the presenter] has pupils on the line but there [...] [is] very little communication between the two of them. It was a monologue basically, she was just telling what [the] problem was and there is no verification whether the child understood or whatever she mentioned. So I am not very happy with the little part that I have seen (Tongaat Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 8 May 2000).

Critics of web-based distance education courses argue that they generally lack interactivity and do not do an adequate job of identifying individual student learning problems (Bork and Britton, 1998). Similar criticisms have been leveled at television-based courses regarding their limited interactivity among students and between students and the instructor (Zvacek, 1991).

The use of difficult terminologies

Naidoo, a biology teacher at Tongaat region related that her decision not watch the programme was influenced by the use difficult terminologies in their teaching (Tongaat Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 8 May 2000, see Appendix F2). She further proposed that some sections of the content could be explained without using certain terminology and recommended that the language should be simplified for the students to understand. These results corroborate the conclusions of Botha (1993:10) that there is criticism that the language level of several educational publications in South Africa is too high to be relevant to 'the poorest of the poor'. Beulah Thumbadoo of the Easy Readers for Adults (ERA) initiative deplores the general lack of simple language writing (Botha, 1993). In this regard, Jenkins (1981) highlighted the importance of avoiding inappropriate metaphors, unnecessary

complex constructions or technical terms and the importance of using plain language throughout a lesson.

Having adequate knowledge of the content being taught and teaching methods in Liberty Learning Channel Programme

Several teachers from the different regions echoed that their decision not to watch the programme was influenced by the fact that they knew much of the knowledge being taught in the programme. Bovey explained this point best when he said: “I have been teaching for thirty years and there is nothing on the Learning Channel that I can learn that I don’t know [...] there is nothing there that expands my knowledge” (Northwood high School Science teachers’ focus group interviews, 8 June 2000).

These results imply that teachers knew the content and teaching methods (instructivism) employed by Liberty Learning Channel. This may be partly because this method of teaching continues to dominate much of educational thought (Macdonald-Ross, 1979; Sewart *et al.*, 1984). A closely related assertion made by Reddy, a science teacher at Northwood High School was that she does not use the programme because the teaching styles are archaic and boring (Northwood High School Science teachers’ focus group interviews, 8 June 2000).

The pace of teaching

Another factor raised by mathematics teachers from Northlands Girls’ High School for their decision not to watch the programme was the pace of teaching. These teachers argued that the pace was rather slow for them and that what is taught is basic. An exchange between Roshni and Morris supports this point (Northlands Girls’ High School Mathematics teachers’ focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). Roshni stated: “I think that it goes very slow and it is also very basic stuff [...] So I’m not gonna sit and watch them run through the entire problem because they go rather slowly” (Northlands Girls’ High School Mathematics teachers’ focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). To which Morris added

What I was watching there now was making me very frustrated because I could see that it was taking forever to substitute those numbers and it might be the pace at which children think, but obviously we think a lot faster, we’re the teacher, so it is not geared for us (Northlands Girls’ High School Mathematics teachers’ focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

Lack of motivation from the Department of Education

Vusi, an English teacher at Eshowe region related that his decision not to watch the programme was influenced by lack of motivation from the Department of Education. He argued that the Department of Education did not motivate teachers to utilise *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Vusi pointed out: "it's only that I haven't been motivated to watch the Learning Channel. I think the department [of education] needs to motivate us to watch it" (Eshowe English teachers' focus group interviews, 25 February 2000). These results corroborate the conclusions of Rosenholtz (1989) that an innovation given less emphasis by school and district administrators will have less of a chance to be accepted by the teachers.

The subjects being broadcast

Subject broadcast of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* influence some of the Tongaat English and mathematics students' focus group interviewees decision not to watch the programme. These students added that if what was being broadcast was not relevant to them, they would not watch. Paulsen illustrated this point by saying; "Depending on the subject [...] they [presenters] are talking about [...] if it's something very good to me I will watch it. If it's not relevant to me I will not watch" (Tongaat English students' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). Also, Kevin said: "May be they have other things besides your subject like sometimes we don't do [...] they show standard grade and you are higher grade and you don't want to watch it" (Tongaat Mathematics students' focus group interview, 7 March 2000). The above results imply that the subjects these students take influences their watching of the programme. If it is a subject they do, they would watch and *vice versa*.

Lack of access to television

Lack of ownership of television set was a factor raised by two biology students from Imbali region for their decision not to watch the programme. These students claimed that they did not watch the programme because they did not own a television set at their homes. Vincent stated: "It is because we don't have the television at home, nothing else" (Imbali Biology students' focus group interviews, 13 April 2000). In similar contention, Ambrose said: "I would like to watch the Learning Channel but there is no television" (Imbali Biology students' focus group interviews, 13 April 2000). These results are in agreement with findings of the SouthAfrica.info

report/South African Advertising Research Foundation (2002) that in South Africa, almost 45 per cent of rural households have television sets and urban television penetration is at 84 per cent of all households. The above results imply that of all the regions under study, only Imbali region (inhabited by Blacks) had some respondents without television sets at home.

Participants not wanting to learn when they go home

Some students from the well resourced schools detailed that their decision not watch the programme was influenced by the fact that they did not want to learn when they got home after a long day at school. Shaun pointed out that: "When you get home after a long day at school, the last thing you gonna want to do is sit down and watch cartoons but not learn" (New Forest Secondary School Science students' focus group interviews, 23 march 2000). Also, Charity said: "And Saturday morning, you want something different, you want to break from school and the Learning Channel, I think it's a bad time because you want to escape from school" (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). Netshitomboni (1999) reported similar results.

The presenters being old and boring

Martha, a mathematics student at Northlands Girls' High School related that her decision not to watch the programme is prompted by the fact that the presenters are old and boring. She further suggested that if they had young dynamic presenters, one may be tempted to watch, as it is clear from the following quote from Martha:

If they put a younger, more dynamic person [...] may be you'll be like tempted to watch it. Not that you will be really listening to what they are saying, but you know something will get in. But then now you got this old guy, who is going on about maths, it kind of bores you (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

In his study entitled "*viewing age: Lifespan identity and television viewing choices*" media scholar Jake Harwood found that "all age group [view] a television universe in which lead characters of their own age group are over-represented relative to their presence in the population" (Harwood, 1997: 209). Larson (1995: 541) also argued that this is because most television programming, produced by adults for general audience, does not speak to adolescents' developmental issues.

Lack of interest in the programme

Lack of interest in the programme was raised by a mathematics student from Port Natal High School and a biology student from Grosvenor Boys' High School (well resourced schools) as one of the factors which influenced their decision not to watch the programme. Hercules asserted: "I think the reason I may not watch it is because I don't think I'm interested in it" (Port Natal High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 5 April 2000). Similarly, Nolan and Mathew respectively, said: "I'll say there's nothing really stopping me from watching it. But, I'd say I'm not really interested in it" and "I just don't find it interesting" (Gosvenor Boys' High School Biology students' focus group interviews, 6 April 2000).

3.2.2.4. Viewers feelings about *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

Viewers' feelings of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* were assessed using the questions: "How do you feel about (i) the time of the day *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* is broadcast? (ii) the length of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*?; In general, what do you like or dislike about *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*?; And do you think *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* is targeted to all South African society?; Does *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* appeal across class and racial divisions?" (Appendix B, questions 9 i & ii, 10 i & iii, and 13). Participants' feeling on the above issues will be discussed in the following order: the time slot; the length; the target audience; whether the programme appeals across class and racial divisions; and likes and dislikes about the programme.

3.2.2.4.1. Participants' feelings on the time slot of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

Findings indicated that the participants' strongly felt that the time slot was inappropriate for the target audience because during that time they are at school and cannot watch the programme. The participants' described the time slot with words like "bad", "not right", "wrong", "awkward", "not helpful", "not good" and "inappropriate" (see Appendix F1 & F2). Similarly, the problem of inappropriate time slots for educational programmes has also been reported at the British Open University (Kirkwood, 1990; Fox, 1996) and as well as in the use of educational television in West Australian secondary schools (Oliver, Grant and Younger, 1994: 35).

All the teachers who participated in the focus group discussions further related that the time slot was inappropriate as they cannot integrate the programme into their teaching and if they had to, a lot of changes in the school timetable would have to be done, given that subjects being broadcast do not coincide with what was being taught at school at that time. They also claimed that they had to follow the timetable in order to be able to finish the syllabus. Phumelele expressed this point best when she said: "It's very important that teachers follow the timetable and we cannot fit [the programme in their classroom] because we have to finish the syllabus" (Eshowe English teachers' focus group interviews, 25 February 2000). These results corroborate conclusions by Polin (1992) that school cultures or social systems are a

powerful influence on the adoption and integration of technology in the classroom. These teachers further suggested that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* would be helpful if it could be broadcast or re-broadcast after school when everyone was back from school (see Appendix F1). Of note is that from mid 2003, the SABC started giving Liberty Learning Channel an afternoon time slot (14: 30 pm-16: 30 pm) on days when the corporation is not covering live cricket matches or Parliament discussions. Whenever this time slot is available, Liberty Learning Channel presents phone-in lessons. While the usefulness of the phone-in broadcasts cannot be overlooked, the fact remains that those teachers and students who are at school during the morning broadcast still continue to miss out as there is no re-broadcast of the contents covered during that time slot.

On the contrary, Pillay, a biology teacher at Tongaat region proposed that the time slot was fine for the schools that had integrated the programme into their teaching, as evidenced in the following quote:

You see if the school is using the television as the medium of instruction to the pupils, then that would be fine because the whole class is sitting and they are having the different subjects on TV in the school there. So it would be fine but for those who want to use it as an additional resource where you have the normal lesson in your classroom and may be at the end of the day, then you have this as an additional resource for pupils then it involves for those pupils because especially the pupils who come to our schools now, to school around here, the television is not on during the day. [...] we can't fit our school timetable with the learning channel. So therefore for us it wouldn't, it's not very practical (Tongaat Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 8 May 2000).

In similar vein, Raees said: "I think that most of the people who use this [programme] use it as a study aid at school. For those people it is perfect. But for the matric students at schools which don't use it as a teaching aid they don't benefit" (Northwood High School Science students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000).

The time slot for the Saturday broadcast was felt to be inappropriate by two mathematics students from Northland Girls' High School. Martha stated that she was sometimes asleep at 9 O'clock in the morning during the time of the broadcast (Northland Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). To which Charity added that

It's on the weekend and most of us are still in a party mood and something like that and we [...] [have] just [been] in school the whole week and we want something different, something refreshing, something that will appeal to our minds and an educational programme at Saturday in the morning doesn't really appeal to us (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

These results also corroborate conclusions by Gunter (2000:165, 171) that in the home environment, television viewing is shaped by the presence of other established household practices which structure the day. These activities include sleeping and waking times, meal times, going to and returning from work times and so on. Also Netshitomboni (1999: 77) observed that both female and male respondents (students) emphasised the need to listen to purely entertainment programmes as a way of escaping from the pressure of schoolwork.

3.2.2.4.2. Participants' views on the Length of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

On the question looking into the teachers' and students' opinions on the length of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, an overwhelming majority of the participants agreed that the length of the programme (one-and-half hours) was too long for one's concentration span (see Appendix F1 and F2). The teachers claimed that the attention span of students was far less than one-and-half hours especially if the programme was just facts and factual knowledge (theory). Students would not be able to concentrate that long in a transmission mode of a programme (like *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*) (see Appendix F1). On the contrary, Genzwein (1984:174) posited that the power of concentration is not inborn but an acquired faculty and that schools must train pupils to develop it. Therefore, it is argued here that with proper training on how to maintain concentration, students can be able to utilise *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* without losing concentration.

However, some students and teachers from the different areas under study, felt that the programme was too short (see Appendix F1). For example, some students from Eshowe and Imbali region contended that the length was too short because the programme discusses content from basics and progresses to more complex issues. Nokhukhana illustrated this point best by saying that the "it [the programme] is too short because the subject discussed starts from the basics and goes to the hard parts

and the time is too short for the discussion” (Eshowe Biology students’ focus group interviews, 22 February 2000). While Lydia stated that the length was short for revision and phone-ins. Lydia said: “I think it depends on the nature of the programme. If it is a revision programme, pupils are phoning with questions, one and a half hours is a bit short” (Tongaat English teachers’ focus group interviews, 9 March 2000).

Also, Vivek expressed that the length of the programme was not enough for people who did not go to school or distance education learners. He said: “an hour and half is not enough for people who don’t actually go to school. It is distance learning” (Westville Boys’ High School English students’ focus group interviews, 31 May 2000). Therefore, these results seem to imply that the length of the programme was short for programmes teaching from the basics, revision, interactive (phone-ins) and for distance education learners.

On the contrary, several students from the different regions under investigation and some teachers from Queensburgh Girls’ High School, Imbali and Eshowe region, said that the length of programme was fine. The students argued that the length was acceptable because the presenters gave detailed explanations. Gina explained that “they [presenter] really explain questions in depth. So one hour I think that would be too short [...] so I think one and half hours is fine” (Port Natal High School Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 5 April 2000). While some of the teachers from Imbali and Eshowe regions said that the length was fine if the programme was interactive, with all English teachers from Queensburgh Girls’ High School relating that the length was acceptable for teaching English (see Appendix F1).

3.2.2.4.3. Participants’ perceptions on the Target audience of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

On the question assessing the participants’ perceptions on the target audience for *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, findings indicated that most of the teachers and students from the different regions under study felt that the programme was targeted to all South African matric students and society in general (see Appendix F1 & F2). A number of reasons were given to support their arguments. These reasons

were: that the programme was targeted to everyone in matric in terms of syllabus coverage; people who phone-in are from the different regions in South Africa; and for every South African even those who are not in School. These reasons will be discussed in details using representative comments from the respondents.

The programme was targeted to everyone in matric in terms of syllabus coverage

Results indicated that the majority of the participants' were of the opinion that the programme was targeted to all South African matric students especially in terms of syllabus coverage. Naresh stated that the programme was targeted to every matric student when he said: "I think so, in terms of syllabus coverage [...] and these basic examples we make as we teach, teaching methodologies" (Tongaat Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 7 March 2000). Also, Zama related that the programme was made for everyone because they are writing the same exam papers and are learning the same things (Imbali Biology students' focus group interviews, 13 April 2000, see Appendix F2). Similarly, William Smith⁴ reported that the programme was targeted to all matric students (personal interview, 11 August 1999).

People who phone-in are from the different regions in South Africa

A point put forward by some students from Imbali and Tongaat regions, was that the programme was targeted to everyone because people who phoned-in were from all races and from different regions in South Africa. Zakhele expressed this point best when he said: "I do think it [the programme] is focused on the South Africans because we [...] see kids call [ing] from Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and so forth. Cape Town, phoning [...] just asking for some help" (Imbali Science students' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000).

The programme was targeted to every South African even those who are not in School

Some students from New Forest Secondary School, Grosvenor Boys' High School, Eshowe and Imbali regions related that the programme was made for everyone, and even those who are not in school can watch it and learn (see Appendix F2). Nokuzola explained that "even if you are not a student [...] if you want to learn something, it's

⁴ The founder and manager of Liberty Learning Channel organisation and also the science presenter.

not only for students you can learn something from the channel” (Imbali Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 12 April 2000). These students seem to acknowledge the existence of casual audiences⁵ for *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

However, a few participants felt that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was not aimed at the whole of South African society. Several reasons were put forward for the above assertion. These grounds were: the time slot; the programme is targeted to weaker students or slow learners; the programme is catering for those learner who are competent in the subject; the programme is targeted to Gauteng syllabus; the programme is not targeted to learners who do not take the subject broadcasts; the programme is broadcast in English; lack of access to television sets and phones; and not everyone knew about the programme. These issues will be discussed in details drawing representative comments from the participants.

The time slot

Because of the inappropriate time slot for *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, some teachers from the well resourced schools and a student from Tongaat region (less resourced schools), reported that the programme cannot be targeted to the South African schooling system. These teachers further contended that the programme could be targeted to those who are studying through distance education and those who watch over the weekend and holidays. Nisha said:

I think the Learning Channel is on a bit early as well while we are at school. So, it can’t target the South African schooling system. Obviously for all those people that are completing school in distance learning and only those we can watch [on] the weekend and the holiday (Grosvenor Boys’ High School Biology teachers’ focus group interview, 6 April 2000).

Similarly, Sheshmika, remarked: “No. Because we cannot watch it on television every time it is on because of the time slot” (Tongaat Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 7 March 2000).

The programme is targeted to weaker students or slow learners

⁵ People watching the programme, but are not part of the target audience

The programme was also said not to be targeted to all South African matric students by two mathematics teachers from Tongaat region and two students from the well resourced schools. These participants asserted that the programme was not aimed at all the students, but at weaker students or slow learners. Patricia explained this point by saying: “As Kubeni was saying, basically it’s just for the [...] slow learner because I mean, if you’ve got a bright child, they won’t [...] look at the programme because the work is not suitable for them. It’s of low standard” (Tongaath Mathematics teachers’ focus group interviews, 7 March 2000). In the same vein, Kirthanya conveyed:

I don’t think that it is targeted to all South African students. I think that they think it is, [...] [but] like my fellow students, we don’t watch it. It doesn’t appeal to them, it is of a lower standard than they [are] usually used to. [...] the Learning Channel is based, it’s just the very basic as I said before, whereas [...] a lot of us do subjects on higher grade, we need to get A’s. We need a higher type of revision and the learning channel doesn’t give us that (Northlands Girls’ High School Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

The programme is catering for those learners who are competent in the subject

The programme was said not to target all the South African matric students, but to only those students who are competent in the subject. Pillay recounted that the programme catered for those students who are competent in the subject and was not helping the average and below average students. He reasoned that this was because a lot of knowledge was assumed, that is, there was an assumption that students knew the subject (Tongaath Biology teachers’ focus group interviews, 8 May 2000, see Appendix F1).

On the contrary, William Smith responded to the above arguments by saying that Liberty Learning Channel was doing hundred per cent the right thing since some teachers and students felt that the programme was for weaker students and others that the programme was for the competent students (personal interview, 6 July 2000). He further added the level of the programmes was dictated by students through phoning-in with questions and that those who want an advanced kind of revision should phone-in.

The programme is targeted to Gauteng syllabus

It should be noted that educational provisions in South Africa occur almost entirely at a provincial level and that priorities and their implementation vary from province to province (Department of Education, 1996: 29). It is therefore not surprising that the majority of the Northwood High School science students focus group interviewees stated that the programme was not targeted to the whole South African society but Gauteng or Johannesburg syllabus and that the programme does not help them. An exchange between Naidoo and Ryan supports this point best (Northwood High School Science students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000). Naidoo stated: "As Kapil said, [...] it is like on the Johannesburg syllabus, it doesn't help us" (Northwood High School Science students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000). To which Ryan added "It is not targeted to all South Africans as such, it is targeted more to the Gauteng" (Northwood High School Science students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000).

With regard to the above results, William Smith said that he understood what these students felt and added that the programme focuses more on Gauteng because 65 per cent of the matrics are in Gauteng (personal interview, 6 July 2000).

The programme is not targeted to learners who do not take the subject broadcasts

The programme was also thought not to be targeted to all South African matric students as it did not cater for students who did not take the subject broadcasts of the programme. Mbusi explained this point succinctly:

Mbusi: How many subjects does it broadcast?

Eunice: Maths, [...] Science, English and Biology.

Mbusi: Then it doesn't interest those who do accounts and other subjects they do not do (Eshowe Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 22 February 2000).

The programme is broadcast in English

The programme was reported not to be targeted to all South African matric students because it broadcasts only in English as asserted by some students from New Forest Secondary School, Tongaat, Imbali and Eshowe regions (see Appendix F2). These students added that English was not the only language in South Africa and not

everyone understood it. When asked whether the programme was targeted to all South African society, Abdul respondent as follows:

No. [...] I don't think so because if you look at the Learning Channel, I won't say they broadcast in different languages and in our country there is different languages. Some people are not benefiting from the programme because they cannot understand English (Tongaat Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 7 March 2000).

Also, Khumbuzile said: "I don't think it interest the blacks, we don't understand their English. So it's difficult to understand" (Eshowe Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 22 February 2000).

Lack of access to television sets and telephones

Another factor why the programme was said not to be targeted to all the matric students was due to the lack of ownership of television sets and telephones to some of the people in the South African population. This point was put forward by some English students from Westville Boys' High School and Tongaat region. The views of these students could be said to be best explained by some of the Westville Boys' High School English students' focus group interviewees:

Misizwe: Do the disadvantaged students who need this programme have televisions?

Eunice: That's what we do not know.

Misizwe: They do not even have televisions in schools.

Moeti: Another thing is that they might have a television, but do they have the telephone to ask questions? They might have questions to ask and they cannot phone-in to find the answer.

Misizwe: I think what they should do may be [...] is to provide televisions to the disadvantaged schools.

Mystery: The South African education, Kedal Asmal⁶, teachers should be trained on how to use [...] the programmes should be integrated to the system and they should go to the under privileged communities and help them, and assist them because they do not have television (Westville Boys' High School English students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000).

The above quote also called on the Minister of Education to ensure that teachers in disadvantaged schools are trained on how to use the programme, the programme to be integrated to education system and provision of infrastructures to disadvantaged

⁶ The former South African Minister of Education.

schools to enable them to use the programme. Because of lack of facilities for viewing the programme in some parts of the South African society, some students argued that the programme is targeted to those who have facilities (Port Natal High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 5 April 2000).

Not everyone knew about the programme

Lack of awareness of the programme to some of the participants was another reason put forward by a science student at Tongaat region for suggesting that the programme was not targeted to all South African society. This student further proposed that the programme should be advertised more than at the moment. Reza explained that "it [the programme] is not targeted to the entire society. If it would be exposed far much more than it is at the moment [...] it would be reaching out to almost everyone, not just certain groups of people who know about it" (Tongaats Science students' focus group interviews, 6 March 2000).

However, a number of teachers who contended that the programme was aimed for everyone raised their concerns over the following issues: the language used, (they claimed that not everyone understood English terminologies) and the pace (they claimed it was too fast for students to grasp). Kubeni stated that "language may be a problem to the pupils who are not English first language speakers" (Tongaats Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 7 March 2000). Also, Prishnar said:

Yes, it's most definitely targeted to them but it seems they are fighting a losing battle as there is [...] the problem with communication. Not every one of our students are so well versed with English [...] Naidoo mentioned things like terminology as well, that too must [...] surely bring the problem and they just go on so fast I am sure pupils are gonna get lost. Definitely the average or below average is lost [...] But I believe it's truly fast and it's difficult for the students to grasp sort of quickly (Tongaats Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 8 May 2000).

It is worth noting that the use of radio and television depends on both feasibility of the transmission and coverage as well as the receptivity, which these media has with the students (Escotet, 1984: 148). In the present study, a concern to do with the reach of the programme was raised. Some teachers argued that although the programme was intended for all South Africans, the programme did not reach those who really needed it due to lack of resources. This was conveyed by several teachers from Northwood

High School, Tongaat, Imbali and Eshowe regions. The following quote from Northwood High School Science teachers' focus group interviewees could be taken to speak for them all:

Reddy: I think it is, but it doesn't reach those who really need it like Bovey said.

Bovey: Like I said previously, it should be targeted at the disadvantaged people like in the townships they are the ones who could benefit most from the Learning Channel. Because I taught in a school in Umlazi for a year and I know that the teachers are either not really well trained or secondly not very relatively high work ethic. And so the pupils who could benefit the most should be the township students and they are the ones who don't have the technological ability to link on to the Learning Channel. They do not have the television sets, they do not have equipment, they don't even have textbooks. Some of the schools do not even have paint on the chalkboard, you can't write on the chalkboard (Northwood High School Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 June 2000).

Lack of resources is prominent in majority of schools in South Africa, according to findings by South African Institute for Distance Education (1999), Mendel (2000) and Accenture, Markle and UNDP (2001).

Anne, a biology teacher at Imbali put forward that the programme would reach many people if it was not on SABC 3. She argued that SABC 3 tended to be watched more by White people. Anne said: "I think it would reach more South Africans if it was not TV 3, SABC 3. I think SABC 3 tends to be, I think it has more White people watching it. That's my perception of SABC 3. [...] but the fact that the *Sowetan* newspaper is being used for the written supplement [...] [it] then balances the picture a little, you know" (Imbali Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 13 April 2000). Similarly, Vusi said: "As Anne said [...] most people don't tune into TV 3 especially Blacks. TV 3 is just very few programmes that we actually tune into. So 8 out of 10 they [Black people] don't know it (the programme]" (Imbali Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 13 April 2000). These results corroborate the conclusions of Tomaselli *et al.* (1989); Mersham (1985; 1998) that the SABC is distinctive in its organisation as a result of its ethnic orientation which sees particular channels aimed at different language ethnic groups.

Lydia, an English teacher at Tongaat region proposed that Liberty Life should expand funding to the poor schools to enable them to use the programmes. She remarked: "So

many schools don't have television sets especially the poor schools. And I think in that respect [...] Liberty Life should consider having a survey and ensuring the success of the project by possibly extending funding to the poor schools in South Africa" (Tongaat English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000).

3.2.2.4.4. Participants' opinions on whether *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* appeals across class and racial divisions

On the item eliciting teachers' and students' opinions on whether *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* appealed across class and racial divisions, several participants from the different regions under study reported that the programme appealed across class and racial divisions. An exchange between Don and Caleb supports this point best (Tongaat Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 7 March 2000). Don stated that the programme "is for everyone, everybody, from any class, whether middle, high or low" (Tongaat Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 7 March 2000). To which Caleb added "Yah, it is for all. Everyone who put the TV on, when it is on can watch" (Tongaat Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 7 March 2000).

These participants gave several grounds for asserting that the programme appealed across class and racial divisions. These reasons varied from individual to individual and they included that: the programme appealed to any child doing matric; the programme attracted the weaker students across class and racial division; people phoning-in were from different cultural backgrounds or races; and the programme appealed to everyone so long as they had television, the *Sowetan* and the Internet. These reasons will be discussed in details drawing representative comments from the respondents.

The programme appealed to any child doing matric

The programme was said to appeal across class and racial divisions to any child doing matric by some mathematics teachers from Northlands Girls' High School. These teachers further added that the programme would be very helpful for revision or consolidating classroom work to students who cannot afford to pay for extra lessons or tuition, as Heather declared:

Well it does, I mean any child doing matric maths, science or biology, whatever [...] it is targeting them. It will be of interest to them [...] I mean the only reason why a teacher would recommend it is that if they know that the child can't afford extra lessons and the child has a TV at home and can watch it and is not involved in sport on a Saturday morning. Then she can say "look this is one way to help you with revision because [you] can't afford extra lessons"" (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

The programme attracted the weaker students across class and racial division

The programme was also thought to appeal to the weaker students across class and racial divisions by a mathematics teacher from Northlands Girls' High School (a well resourced School). Roshni supported this point when she said: "I think it is targeting the weaker pupils, no matter what race group or class they are. It's just the weaker pupils" (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

People phoning-in were from different cultural backgrounds or races

Additionally, the programme was said to appeal across class and racial division as people phoning-in were from different cultural background or races. This point was put forward by some students and teachers from Queensburgh Girls' High School, Imbali, Eshowe and some science and biology students from Tongaat region. An exchange between Shihaam and Keshan supports this point best (Tongaats Science students' focus group interviews, 6 March 2000). Shihaam said: "Basically with that thing, I think there is no racial discrimination there when the teacher brings [...] problems, [...] there is pupils from different languages, different multilingual kids speaking. Therefore, I don't feel there is any racial discrimination" (Tongaats Science students' focus group interviews, 6 March 2000). To which Keshan added

I think that it doesn't really have a specific colour group because whether you're rich or poor, Black or White, we're always learning at school, and because there are mainly White presenters they are doing subjects we are doing in school (Tongaats Science students' focus group interviews, 6 March 2000).

The programme appealed to everyone so long as they had television, the Sowetan and the Internet

Further, the programme was said to interest everyone so long as they had access to television, the *Sowetan* and the Internet. This point was raised by some science students at Tongaat region and New Forest Secondary School. These students added that the poor who cannot afford television sets and Internet could buy the *Sowetan* Newspaper and the rich who have no time to sit and watch the programme could access Liberty Learning Channel material from the Internet (see Appendix F2).

3.2.2.4.4.1. Significant concerns arising from some of the participants who said that the programme appealed across class and racial divisions

Despite some of the participants' acknowledgement that the programme appealed across class and racial divisions, they raised concerns about the presenters being too fast in teaching and limiting time in terms of explanation to Black pupils unlike the White pupils, Black students being not interested in the programme even though they need it most, and some students in the well resourced schools finding the programme extremely boring. These concerns will be addressed in details using representative comments from the participants.

The presenters being too fast in teaching and limiting time in terms of explanation to Black pupils unlike the White pupils

Lydia, an English teacher from Tongaat region maintained that the programme could appeal across class and racial division, but had a grievance about the presenters being a bit too fast in presenting and limiting the time in terms of explanation to black pupils unlike White pupil, which she claimed were awarded a lot of time. Lydia expressed her feelings on the matter as follows:

I think it can, I have one particular thing from the presenter. I think [...] she misunderstood part of the question and she also explained but I think a bit too fast and then she tended [...] to limit the time in terms of explanations to black pupils compared to the explanation she gave to the White pupil from Amanzimtoti. She gave a very detailed explanation [...] But I found that she just spoke to Patrick [Black pupil] and [...] she rushed through her explanation and then the child [...] The child could have been confused during the second question she asked (Tongaat English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000).

Black students being not interested in the programme even though they need it most

Another point raised by a Westville Boys' High School English student was that the programme pleased across class and racial division, but Blacks in some way are not interested in it even though they need it more than anybody else. This student added that Blacks would not watch it because they liked enjoyment and there was no enjoyment in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, educational programmes and school. Moeti said:

Yes, I think so because if you look at it in a sense [...] like the Blacks for example, they won't be more interested but they need it. They need it more than anybody but they won't be interested [because] [...] they like enjoyment, well you see that thing (*Liberty Learning Channel Programme*) has no enjoyment whatsoever, something with learning and school, especially they don't like learning, they are just going their [to school] because they are being forced by the parents (Westville Boys' High School English students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000).

Some students in the well resourced schools would find the programme extremely boring

A student from Westville Boys' High School related that the programme appealed to all races and classes, but in schools with good teachers and resources like theirs, some students would find it extremely boring, as Warren articulated: "it appeal to all classes and races, but in schools where students have good teachers and resources such as Westville, some students will find the programme [...] extremely boring" (Westville Boys' High School English students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000).

On the other hand, a number of teachers and students strongly held that the programme did not appeal across class and racial divisions. Several reasons were offered for this response and they included: all presenters were White; the programme appealed to the rich who could afford the resources; the programme appealed to those who speak English; the time slot; and the programme does not broadcast all the subjects in the syllabus. These responses will be discussed in details drawing representative comments from the focus group participants.

All presenters were White

The programme was said not to appeal across class and racial divisions because all the presenters were White, a position put forward by a teacher from Imbali region. She further suggested that presenters ought to be representative of the demographics of the society for the programme to gain that appeal. Anne remarked:

I do think it's a problem that every single teacher is White on this [programme], I have forgotten the name. I think that is a barrier. I think they must do some affirmative action [...] make sure that the teachers are representing all our different race groups that we have. I mean we have such a variety and I always think it's such a bad thing when you only see White people do something like this. It gives the wrong message (Imbali Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 13 April 2000).

Similarly, research by David Buckingham in 1990 revealed that *the Cosby Show* provoked considerable discussion on the representation of Blacks on TV, which was generally seen as inadequate and patronising, by Black and White children alike. Programmes like *Dallas* and *Dynasty* were condemned for their lack of Black characters, while *East Enders* was seen as reserving its most dramatic storylines for the White characters (Buckingham, 1990).

The programme appealed to the rich who could afford the resources

The programme was thought to appeal to the rich who could afford the resources by some teachers from Imbali and Eshowe region (less resourced schools). Lungi illustrated this point best when she said:

I would say it mostly appeals to those who are rich because they've got means, they can afford to buy TVs, they can afford to buy VCRs and tape those programmes. And those who especially we Blacks, we are still disadvantaged, we do not have [...] televisions (Imbali English teachers' focus group interviews, 15 April 2000).

The above results imply that the programme did not appeal to the poor due to lack of resources. A similar revelation was raised by some students from Tongaat and Imbali regions. Lorraine said: "Thinking of the poor, most of them don't have access to TV, a lot of them can't afford to buy the paper. So, if you say that it's targeted to all, I don't think it is to the poor. I think that it will be unfair" (Tongaat Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 7 March 2000).

On the contrary, some science students from Northwood High School (a well resourced school) said that the programme did not appeal to the rich because they have the Internet and money to send their children to good schools. Raees pointed out: “the rich classes have the Internet and money to send the kids to good schools. So they don’t even watch Liberty Life” (Northwood High School Science students’ focus group interviews, 31 May 2000). Also, Irvin, a biology student at Grosvenor Boys’ High School put forward that the programme did not appeal to all because he did not think that the rich watched it because they pay fortunes as school fees and students get everything they need (Grosvenor Boys’ High School Biology students’ focus group interviews, 6 April 2000, see Appendix F2).

From the above results, it is evident that those who cannot afford the resources to enable them to use the programme are disadvantaged as they cannot utilise the programme, whereas those who have or can afford the resources do not necessarily need the programme as they take their children to schools with resources and qualified teachers, and if need be hire private tutors for their children.

The programme appealed to those who speak English

The programme was said to appeal to those who speak English by several teachers from Grosvenor Boys’ High School, Westville Girls’ High School, Tongaat region and some science students from Northwood High School. These teachers argued that this language problem needed to be solved by perhaps giving explanations in Zulu or other local languages. Reddy explained that

The language problem needs to be resolved, they need to publicise the programme in different languages to cater for the people who don’t understand English very well. Because I think in Black schools the teachers do explain in English and then they switch over to Zulu all the time. And the kids would like to talk Zulu all the time even if they are in English reading schools, they like that explanation given in their own language. And I think if a little bit of that is done it is such a good thing for us (Tongaath Mathematics teachers’ focus group interviews, 7 March 2000).

Similarly, Ryan stated that the programme appealed to English speaking people (Northwood High School Science students’ focus group interviews, 31 May 2000, see Appendix F2). The programme was also said not to appeal to those doing English as a second language, as set books discussed in the programme were not the same as

those being taken by English second language learners. The programme was said to discuss set books for English first language learners (Eshowe English students' focus group interviews, 23 February 2000, see Appendix F2).

The time slot

Phumelele, an English teacher at Eshowe region strongly believed that the programme did not appeal across class and racial divisions due to the time slot. She reasoned that the programme was broadcast when they were at school and they were disadvantaged as they did not use television at school. Reasons given for not using television when teaching were too much work at school, only one television set being available for the whole school. Phumelele illustrated this point by contending that the programme is

Broadcast when people are in school, we are disadvantaged may be there are those who use [the programme] in school. That means the rest of us cannot see it because we are in school [...] In our schools we have a lot [of] work and kids, but only one television, so really it becomes a problem (Eshowe English teachers' focus group interviews, 25 February 2000).

The Programme does not broadcast all the subjects in the syllabus

The programme was reported not to appeal across class and racial divisions by three students from well resourced schools because it did not broadcast all the subjects in the syllabus. An exchange between Michelle and Shelaine supports this point best (New Forest Secondary School Science students' focus group interviews, 23 March 2000). Michelle said: "Some people who do not do science won't know what is going on and many people who do science will know what is going on" (New Forest Secondary School Science students' focus group interviews, 23 March 2000). To which Shelaine added "I don't think it appeals to everybody [...] they [Liberty Learning Channel] do not do all the subjects" (New Forest Secondary School Science students' focus group interviews, 23 March 2000).

3.2.2.4.5. Participants' opinions on what they liked best and disliked most about Liberty Learning Channel Programme

Also, examined in this study were the participants' views on what they liked best and disliked most about *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Findings showed that the majority of the teachers and students like the programme (see Appendix F1 & F2). Various reasons were given for liking the programme. These reasons were: the

programme was a great concept as it would help with revision; the use of technology; teaching methods used in the presentation; the use of subject experts as presenters; the programme helped understand more about the subject; the programme exposed students to things they had not being exposed to in their classroom teaching; William Smith; the presenters liveliness; presenters gave students a chance to say their point of view; and the programme helped South African society and also those less fortunate. These reasons will be unpacked using representative comments from the participants.

The programme was a great concept as it would help with revision

The great majority of the teachers reported that the idea of having *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was a great concept as it would help with revision, where there are large numbers of students in class who may have difficulties and also where there are no schools nearby. Cecelia explained this point best by saying:

I think you get if you have very large classes like we have, for example, 40, plus 50 kids in a class and they have a problem with a certain part of the work [...] the Learning Channel [...] can help [...]. I think it's good [...] if you don't have schools nearby [...] and then of course children can use that for revision (Werda Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 15 May 2000).

Also, a number of science and biology students from Eshowe and Tongaat regions claimed that they liked the programme because it helped them in revising and clarifying what they did not understand at school (see Appendix F2). The use of matric support programmes on television for revision and for clarifying those sections that were not understood from classes was also reported by Research International (1998: 38).

The use of technology

The use of technology (television) in teaching was another reason why the programme was liked by a science teacher at Tongaat region. Chetty explained that he "like [s] most [...] the use of technology" (Tongaat Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000).

Teaching methods used in the presentation

Two teachers, one from Imbali region and the other from Queensburgh Girls' High School related that they loved the programme because of the methods used in their presenting. Bongiwe stated: "I like the new or the other ways of teaching that they use, then I can go and try in my classes" (Imbali Science teachers' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000). Also, Vivien said: "I like the way she presented it [lesson]. I think it was a good presentation" (Queensburgh Girls' High School English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000).

On the contrary, another teacher from Grosvenor Boys' High School and some mathematics students from Northland Girls' High School made a case that they disliked *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* due to the approaches used in teaching. Ebrahim asserted that the presenters just teach the same way as is done in classrooms and there was no practical experience or live experiences shown in the programme (Grosvenor Boys' High School Science teachers' focus group interviews, 6 April 2000, see Appendix F1). The students claimed that Liberty Learning Channel teaching methods are old and the presenters make simple things a complicated affair when teaching. They also proposed that there was need for Liberty Learning Channel to update its teaching methods (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000, see Appendix, F2). These students views can be said to be best expressed by Kirthanya in the following quote:

I dislike their teaching methods. [...] once I've watched it for five minutes and I think that it was William Smith. It was a very basic problem and he made it into a rather complicated affair and [...] [he] used long, old methods and it doesn't help us in the long run because things like maths are being updated all the time, we need the new methods, the fast methods to finish the paper on time (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

The use of subject experts as presenters

It should be noted that good education demands good teachers (Perraton, 1993:1). Beeby (1966) also stressed the importance of an adequate command of subject matter, and warned that teachers could not expect to teach effectively or well if they were faced with a syllabus beyond the limits of their own understanding. In this study, it was evident that a mathematics teacher from Gelofte High School liked the

programme because of use of presenters who knew the subject matter. Kruger stated that she likes “the idea that they [Liberty Learning Channel] really use people that know their subjects. I mean William Smith, [...] he is a great teacher, for example” (Geloft High School Mathematics teachers’ focus group interviews, 3 May 2000).

The programme helped understand more about the subject

Another reason why the programme is liked by a mathematics student at Imbali region was because it helped him understand more about the subjects. Nene illustrated this by asserting that he liked the programme because “it helps to understand more about the subjects” (Imbali Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 12 April 2000).

The programme exposed students to things they had not being exposed to in their classroom teaching

English students at Imbali region revealed that they liked the programme because it exposed them to things they had not seen before at their schools. Lungie explained this point best when she said: “what I like is that as we are Blacks and [...] not at the multi-racial school, [...] the learning programme helps us because they are teaching us some things that we haven't seen before. So I think it is good” (Imbali English students’ focus group interviews, 15 April 2000).

Similarly, students utilisation of matric support programmes on television for covering or learning issues pertaining to the syllabus that were not covered by the teacher was reported by Research International (1998: 38) in its study on evaluation of the matric support campaign.

William Smith

William Smith, one of the presenters, was another factor why the programme was liked by Kathy, an English teacher at Queensburgh Girls’ High School. She further claimed that William Smith was an expert in what he does and he was able to teach mathematics to non-mathematicians. Kathy had this to say:

I think I like the maths man [William Smith] best. [...] he just knows what he is doing. [...] and he is able to teach non-mathematicians to understand how to get things and concepts across. [...] I just find that I grasp maths that I could

never [...] grasp (Queensburgh Girls' High School English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000).

The enthusiasm and liveliness of the presenters

The programme was also liked because of the enthusiasm and liveliness of the presenters. This point was advanced by some English students from Queensburgh Girls' High School, mathematics students from Port Natal High School and biology students from Imbali and Eshowe regions. These students added that Liberty Learning Channel presenters loved their subject and they got them to loving it too, as shown in the following extract:

Nomfundo: The enthusiasm of the teachers. How they portray their subjects, they really love them and you get to love the subject too.

Bianca: Yes, there's so much more passion over it. You can see it and you feel excited especially when they go on about it and you understand. That's the best thing about it. When you actually understand what's going on (Queensburgh Girls' High School English students' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000).

In similar vein, Vusimuzi, said: "I like everything with that channel especially because that lady who teaches, she always puts a smile on her face, which is good" (Imbali Biology students' focus group interviews, 13 April 2000). Similarly, Egan *et al.* (1991) and Gottschalk (2003) reported that learners get more from a course when the instructor seems comfortable with the technology, maintains eye contact with the camera, repeats questions, and possesses a sense of humour. Peres (1998) also reported that something as basic as laughing would attract the attention of the children to the programme since kids like to have a good time and a laugh.

Presenters gave students a chance to say their point of view

The programme was liked by a few English students at Tongaat and Queensburgh Girls' High School because the presenters gave students a chance to say their point of view. Khan stated: "I like the [...] interaction with the teacher and the learners" (Tongaath English students' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). Also, Indira said she "I like the fact they [...] give for people [learners chance] to give ideas as well and it's just nice. Visual aids is better" (Queensburgh Girls' High School English students' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000). The above quote also reveals that the above student liked the programme due to use of visual aids. Amthor points out that

there is general agreement among researchers that people retain about twenty per cent of what they hear, forty per cent of what they see and hear, and seventy-five per cent of what they see, hear and do (1992).

The programme helped South African society and also those less fortunate

Some students from the well resourced schools (Northlands Girls' High School and Westville Boys' High School) said that they liked the programme because it was helping people in South Africa and also people who are less fortunate than they were. Moeti noted that he liked the programme because "it teaches people that are not fortunate like we are, like people that are of lower grade. So it actually raises the status of South Africans as a whole to get up to our standards" (Westville Boys' High School English students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000). Similarly, Sandra expressed her view on the matter as follows: "I like the fact that it is helping other people that don't have the advantages that we do, good teachers and stuff like that" (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

It is noteworthy that a method can be ineffective because students do not like it, because teachers find it too demanding and because of its inherent limitations for the kind of educational aims it is being used for (Sparkes, 1984). In the present study, it was clear from the focus group results that several aspects of the programme were disliked. They included: the time slot; having to pay television licenses and then incur taping expenses; presenters teaching too fast; not having enough publicity for the programme; not having lessons for grade 10 and 11 physical sciences; having only White presenters; not reaching those who really need it; studio setting and background; presenters not appealing to students; the programme is 'just like being in school'; phoning-in; and presenters' way of teaching without inquiring whether students understood what they were teaching. These issues will be discussed in details drawing representative comments from the respondents.

The time slot

Results demonstrated that several teachers and the majority of the students from the different areas under investigation strongly disliked the time slot of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* (see Appendix F1 & F2). For example, Verity, when asked what

she disliked in the programme, replied: “obviously it is the time, because [...] students don’t watch it because of the time” (Queensburgh Girls’ High School English teachers’ focus group interviews, 9 June 2000).

Having to pay television licenses and then incur taping expenses

Another revelation made by Govender, an English teacher at Tongaat region for disliking the programme was the issue of having to pay for television license and incur expenses taping *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Govender remarked: “I don’t see why we actually have to pay TV license and at the same time impose a cost of additional expense just to tape” (Tongaats English teachers’ focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). The above teacher seems to question why they have to pay for television license to SABC and then the services like (*Liberty Learning Channel programme*) are aired at times when they cannot watch and thus, result to incurring more expenses related to taping the programme.

Presenters teaching too fast

Also, the programme was disliked by a mathematics teacher at Eshowe, a biology teacher at Tongaat and an English student at Imbali region, because the presenters taught too fast for students to grasp what they were being taught. Prishnar stated that he “dislike [s] [...] the way it was done, the method, it was way too fast. [It] makes it difficult for the students to grasp” (Tongaats Biology teachers’ focus group interviews, 8 May 2000). Also, Princess said: “the thing that I don’t like, they are too fast in their teaching” (Imbali Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 12 April 2000).

Regarding this problem of teaching too fast, Bates (1984) observes that broadcasts are ephemeral, cannot be reviewed, are uninterruptible and are presented at the same pace for all students. A student cannot reflect upon an idea or pursue a line of thought during a fast paced programme, without losing the thread of the programme itself, and cannot go over the same material several times until it is understood. Also, Research at the British Open University has indicated that “most students find it impossible to take notes while viewing, and those that do are usually very dissatisfied with their notes” (Bates, 1983: 61).

Not having enough publicity for the programme

The programme was disliked by one of the mathematics teachers from Tongaat and a science teacher from Imbali region for the fact that there was not enough publicity on the programme and what topic would be broadcast on *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Reddy noted that he disliked

The publicity, it needs to be publicised like I was checking the TV guide, there is not sufficient information there for you to know what topics is gonna be broadcast on that day you know, there is just very little details it gave. So more publicity should be done in the programme including the top newspapers that you mentioned we didn't even know about [them]. So there should be more publicity (Tongaat Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 7 March 2000).

The above results imply that there was no adequate publicity of the programme.

Not having lessons for grade 10 and 11 physical sciences

Not having lessons for grades 10 and 11 physical sciences was another reason why the programme was disliked by a science teacher from Tongaat region. Chetty felt that it was necessary to have programmes for grades 10 and 11 so that there could be a build-up of concepts from grade 10 to Grade 12 (Tongaat Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000, see Appendix F1).

A point closely related to the above was raised by some mathematics students from Port Natal High School and Eshowe region. These students reported that they disliked the programme due to the fact that they only broadcast certain subjects all the times. Ndumisu stated that he disliked the fact that Liberty Learning Channel was "dealing with only four subjects, and now there are other people who don't do this subjects, like I am doing commercial subjects and I am facing problems" (Eshowe Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 22 February 2000). Also, the programme was disliked by two students from well resourced school due to the fact that it did not broadcast higher-grade materials. Moeti added that higher graders too needed some extra materials (Westville Boys' High School English students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000, see Appendix F2). Similarly, Evania said: "they won't do stuff that you are interested in. I mean you know the simple basic, but you want to get involved in higher grade questions as well because we are higher grade" (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 July 2000).

This problem was also prominent among students on the televised distance education programme at the Northern Arizona University (Wheeler and Batchelder, 1996).

Having only White presenters

The programme was disliked by a biology student and a science teacher from Imbali region, because of having only White presenters. Ncamisile stated: “what I don’t like is to see only the White people, I would like to see a Black person to explain because there are Black people out there who are doing maths” (Imbali Biology students’ focus group interviews, 13 April 2000). Also, Anne said: “the overall thing is of the race group of presenter[s], that’s a very important dislike that I have” (Imbali Science teachers’ focus group interviews 14 April 2000). Similarly, research by David Buckingham in 1990 revealed that programmes like *Dallas* and *Dynasty* were condemned for their lack of black characters, while *East enders* was seen as reserving its most dramatic storylines for the White characters (Buckingham, 1990).

Not reaching those who really need it

The programme was disliked by a student from a well resourced school because he did not think it was effective in promoting education in South Africa as it did not reach those who really need it. Vivek said: “I don’t think it is very effect in promoting education in South Africa, because it doesn’t reach those who really need it” (Westville Boys’ High School English students’ focus group interviews, 31 May 2000).

Studio setting and background

Also, the programme was disliked by a student from a well resourced school because of the studio setting and background. Musizwe asserted: “I don’t really like it at the moment, but if the studio setting and background is improved, may be I will enjoy it, but currently no” (Westville Boys’ High School English students’ focus group interviews, 31 May 2000).

Presenters not appealing to students

Evania, a mathematics student at Northlands Girls' High School revealed that she did not like the presenters because they were boring and just don't appeal to her. She said: "I dislike the teachers because they are so boring and they just did not appeal to me" (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). In his study entitled "*viewing age: Lifespan identity and television viewing choices*" media scholar Jake Harwood found that "all age group [view] a television universe in which lead characters of their own age group are over-represented relative to their presence in the population" (Harwood, 1997: 209).

The programme is 'just like being in school'

Again, two other students from a well resourced school advised that they disliked the programme because it was 'just school' and by the time they get home they are tired of school. An exchange between Staci and Leigh supports this point (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). Staci stated that she "think [s] that it (programme) is just school, we hate school. I do hate school and the syllabus is boring, I am getting through school [because] without school we can't get a tertiary education" (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). To which Leigh added "By this stage we are all tired of school and we have to go home and sit through more learning, its just, I don't think anyone can take it anymore, I just wanna get home and relax" (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). Netshitomboni (1999) reported similar findings in her study on the use of educational programmes in Phalaphala FM radio.

Phoning-in

Phoning-in during the broadcast was isolated as one of the reasons for disliking the programme by science students from Tongaat region and mathematics students from Port Natal High School. They claimed that sometimes the phone lines are so bad that they did not hear what the caller was saying. Their views could be taken to be illustrated by Gina in the following: "Well, dislikes, I don't think there're any except for the calling. A lot of times the lines are really bad you know, when it's the phone-ins that sort of hampers the whole thing" (Port Natal High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 5 April 2000).

Presenters' way of teaching without inquiring whether students understood what they were teaching

A biology student from Eshowe region did not like the programme for the reason that the presenters just carried on answering questions without inquiring whether students understood what they were teaching, as Penelope pointed out: "their questions, they ask you and at the end they are good to give the answer. They don't know whether you have understood how they got the answer" (Eshowe Biology students' focus group interviews, 22 February 2000).

3.2.2.5. Relevance of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* to the needs and expectations of teachers and students

The relevance of the programme to teachers and students needs and expectations was examined using the questions: "Is *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* in anyway relevant to your social realities? Do you think this programme gives a pretty fair view of real life situations in schools? (i) How teaching happens in schools, (ii) Are the examples used relevant to the students, (iii) Are the presenters representative of the multi-racial South African society?, and do you think they should make use of local languages?" (Appendix B, question 11). For easy presentation, results will be presented under the following themes: relevance of teaching methods; relevance of the examples; representativeness of the presenters; and the relevance of the language used in the programme and the possibility of use of local languages.

3.2.2.5.1. Relevance of teaching methods

From the focus group interviews, results indicated that the majority of the teachers from the different regions felt that the teaching methods were relevant to their situations, with the students giving varied responses on the subject matter (see Appendix F1 & F2). The teachers were of the opinion that the teaching was the same as what it is in the classroom situation. An exchange between Phumelele and Dumisile supports this point best (Eshowe English teachers' focus group interviews, 25 February 2000). Phumelele stated that the teaching methods in the classroom and *Liberty Learning Channel programme* were the same by saying "Yah, but they have the old methods. Like we are doing, we are moving from those methods and their

teaching” (Eshowe English teachers’ focus group interviews, 25 February 2000). To which Dumisile added

The programme is supposed to help the learners. And I believe they are not going to help them if they see the same teacher who they saw in school, I don’t mean in terms of being the same person, but the same thing that was done in school especially in our overcrowded classroom. They have to show that they had time to prepare [...] not like it’s myself in class without time and forced by the circumstances around me. They have to come up with something different. Something which will make the lesson interesting. Otherwise they are not interesting more especially the poetry lesson, it was a very boring lesson (Eshowe English teachers’ focus group interviews, 25 February 2000).

The above quotes indicate that the presenters were using the same old “telling method” just as the teachers were using in their classrooms. However, these teachers proposed that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* presenters needed to change their presentation methods for the programme to be interesting to learners. One of the teachers added that the programme was not going to help if the learners were just seeing an extension of the classroom situation in terms of presentation style. These results corroborate the conclusions of Macdonald-Ross (1979) and Sewart *et al.* (1984) that many teachers in both conventional and distance education systems continue to use the traditional or teacher-centred (transmission) method of teaching. Similarly (Prinsloo, 1999) reported that transmission education has dominated the formal education arena in South Africa.

Lydia, an English teacher from Tongaat region defended the use of the telling method in classroom as a result of having large classes. Lydia said teachers rely mostly on the lecture method because “we have pupils of different capabilities and we also have large numbers in our classes. So unfortunately what happens is we often employ the lecture method” (Tongaat English teachers’ focus group interviews, 7 March 2000).

Although some of the participants clearly acknowledged that the teaching methods in classrooms and in *Liberty Learning Channel programme* were the same, they mentioned some slight differences. These differences were: at times teachers spoon-fed and did not involve students; teachers were too fast in their teaching; on television /*Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, time is allocated and it is not flexible to

accommodate all learners; and teachers cater for many students. These points will be discussed further drawing representative comments from the respondents.

Teachers sometimes spoon-fed and did not involve students

Some of the English teachers and students from Imbali and one English student from Eshowe region, made a case that the methods were just the same as in the classroom, but that in class, they sometimes spoon-feed and did not involve the learners, unlike in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* where the presenters try their best to involve students. Reasons for not involving students in the classroom situation included having a lot of work to cover and lots of students in the classroom, all with varied problems, as is clear from the following passage from Imbali English teachers focus group interviewees:

Eunice: So you think it is the same way you people teach in schools?

Lungi: Yah, I will say so, but sometimes we tend to spoon feed them not to involve them a lot, because I am thinking of this English lesson that we have just watched. The teacher tried her based to involve all her callers. It wasn't just a one way thing, he wasn't trying to spoon feed them, he wanted them to contribute, solve the problems, but he wanted them to be fully involved in the lesson. Sometimes that does not fully happen in our schools.

Henry: Yes, I also fall for the same as Lungi said, sometimes we tend to not let the students explain their points. But you find that we do this because we have a lot of work to teach.

Lungi: Because in this case, the teacher is just tackling a particular problem for a particular child, so there are lots of them in class with lots of different problems, in an hour's time you cannot solve each and every problem that is there (Imbali English teachers' focus group interviews, 15 April 2000).

The above results imply that the above teachers' realities at school, like large numbers of learners and lots of work to cover, made them not have interaction with the learners during their teaching. Cuban (1996) reported that due to the incredible complexity of the teachers' jobs, teachers have evolved certain teaching practices, methods and tools that ensure their success. Such techniques include lecture, recitation and homework.

In the classroom, teachers were too fast in their teaching

Another biology student at Imbali region informed that the teaching methods were the same in the classroom and on the programme, but added that teachers in school are too fast in their teaching, unlike the presenters who take their time and even explain better. Nene stated:

Yes it's the same way, but [...] ours teachers are fast unlike the presenters who take their time. [...] our teachers at school they go according to the timetable and they follow time. So they are fast but the presenters take their time and they even explain better (Imbali Biology students' focus group interviews, 13 April 2000).

On television / Liberty Learning Channel Programme, time is allocated and it is not flexible to accommodate all learners

Some teachers from Imbali and Tongaat region disclosed that the methods on *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* and in the classroom were more or less the same. They asserted that on television /*Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, time was allocated and it was not flexible to accommodate all learners, while in the classroom situation they plan what to teach. If the learners show lack of understanding of some concepts, the teachers stop teaching what they had planned and review what they had done previously or the concepts not understood (see Appendix F1). Naresh explained this point best when he said:

It's more or less the same way. Not exactly because each one of us are unique, we have our own unique, methods but overall I would say in my case I would say [...] about 80 per cent it's the same minus presentation and things. And then in the Learning Channel [...] they are governed by time, they have time constraints. We dig deeper into different concepts and if the learner doesn't understand something he asks and we re-teach certain section, which this [*Liberty Learning Channel Programme*] excludes (Tongaath Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 7 March 2000).

Similarly, Bates (1984) also reported that television broadcast is weak with respect to students' control over the time and pace of learning. The same thing can be said of the presenter as far as control of the broadcast time and pace of teaching is concerned since the time for the broadcast and sometimes the amount of work to be covered, is fixed.

In the classroom, teachers cater for many students

Govender, an English teacher at Tongaat region reported that the methods in the classroom and in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* were not always the same. She informed that in school, they catered for many students unlike in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* where they dealt with one child. She further argued

that teachers in the classroom too had to look for the pupils' psychological disadvantages unlike in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* (Tongaat English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000, see Appendix F2). Highlighting to the complex job of classroom teachers, Cuban (1986: 57) noted:

The classroom, located within the larger school organisation, is a crowded setting in which the teacher has to manage twenty-five or more students of approximately the same age who involuntarily spend depending upon their grade level anywhere from one to five hours daily in a room. Amidst continual communication with individual students and groups, the teacher is expected to maintain control, teach a prescribed content, capture students interest in that content, match levels of instruction to differences among students, and show tangible evidence that students perform satisfactory.

This finding was true of the focus group participants' (teachers) role in the classroom.

However, it is worth noting that several students from the different regions under investigation said that the teaching methods at school and in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* were different. Different reasons for this assertion were advanced and included: presenters showed elements, chemical reactions and used pictures as they taught; presenters teach too fast; presenters put humour and show enthusiasm and interest in their teaching; presenters go into depth in their teaching and spend more time on one aspect; presenters did not get enraged when they are asked to repeat the same questions; in the classroom there is more individual attention; the classroom teachers methods were better; and in the classroom teachers sometimes teach in Zulu. These issues will be unpacked using representative comments from the focus group participants.

Presenters showed elements, chemical reactions and pictures as they taught

Teaching methods in the classroom and in *Liberty Learning Channel programme* were said to be different by a few English students from Queensburgh Girls' High School, and some science students from Imbali and Eshowe regions, because in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, the presenters showed elements, chemical reactions and used pictures as they taught, unlike in the classroom where teachers just read and talked (see Appendix F2). Lindiwe explained: "I thought it's different because at school we [are] used to learn [ing] with books only [...] nothing else. In the Learning Channel, they show us everything. Like a catalyst" (Imbali Science

students' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000). Also, Joe told: "The people on TV, they use like pictures, so it's easier to remember and most teachers don't use pictures they just read more and talk to you" (Queensburgh Girls' High School English students' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000).

Similarly, some science and mathematics students at Eshowe region revealed that the teaching done on television was better than the teaching in the classroom because presenters explained and showed chemical reactions unlike in the class. Fox (1996) and Gachui and Matiru (1989) clearly demonstrated that visuals make the message clearer, help learners to remember the information better, motivate the learners, increase attention and help to make learning more real. These findings are true of the above students perceptions of teaching methods in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

In the classroom, there is more individual attention

Teaching methods in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* were said to be different from methods employed in the classroom because in classroom there was more individual attention than on television. This point was advanced by some mathematics and English students at Tongaat region. Helena gave the following response on why teaching in the classroom was better than teaching in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*:

See if you take the Learning Channel and have a teacher to teach a lesson, there are lot of advantages and disadvantages. First, advantages would be in a class you [...] have more individual attention whereas at home you watch the channel alone. You can watch the programme but now in class you can ask the teacher questions whereas you cannot do that if you are sitting at home. You can't be before the presenter and ask some questions. So that would be the advantage of having the teacher in the classroom (Tongaat English students' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000).

The classroom teachers' methods were better

Several students from multi-racial schools and mathematics students from Tongaat region informed that different methods of teaching are applied in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* and in their schools. In this regard, the majority of the mathematics students at Northlands Girls' High School and a science student at Northwood High School (well resourced schools) felt that different teachers have

different teaching methods and that their teachers methods were better than the presenters because of what they called 'first hand attention' or 'personal attention' they get from their teachers (see Appendix F2). Two of the Northlands students added that their teachers were better because they could ask questions without feeling as stupid as they would feel on television. An exchange between Evania and Martha supports this point best (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). Evania stated that the classroom teachers methods of teaching were better than those of presenters in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* because

If I've got a problem it's gonna [...] be personal attention. They [teachers are] able to check my problem out, where if I just had to phone-in these people on TV, I'd be sitting on the phone for hours. And if you ask them a question, they don't answer your question. They go on something like totally different and they will go to the whole problem for you and that's not what you want, what you want [to] know is your problem (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

To which Martha added

I also feel teachers at school are better because you can ask the same question over and over without having to feel stupid. I mean you will feel stupid but you won't feel stupid as you would if you had to ask on TV and everyone knowing that you are like deaf or something like that (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

Also, English students from Westville Boys' High School reported that teaching methods at their school were better than in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* because the presenters were wild and most of the times out of the topic, unlike their teachers who were more focused, to the point and explained in details (Westville Boys' High School English students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000). In addition, these students said that teachers at school could see and get to know whether they understood, and it was easier to relate to the teachers than the presenters on television (Westville Boys' High School English students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000, see Appendix F2).

Presenters teach too fast

A biology student at Imbali region reported that the teaching methods at school and in the programme are not the same. Further, she argued that presenters on *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* teach too fast. Patricia had this to convey: "I think it's

not the same because the time I see the Learning Channel I compare with my teacher, my teacher I think she takes her time explaining but in the Learning Channel they teach me at too fast” (Imbali Science students’ focus group interviews, 14 April 2000).

On the contrary, Nene and Zakhele, both students from Imbali region, pointed out that some of the teachers at school teach too fast, take for granted that students understand and skip some steps, but in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* presenters teach step by step and slowly till one understands (see Appendix F2). Nene contended: “our teachers at school [...] go according to the timetable and follow the timetable. So, they are fast, but the presenters take their time and they even explain better” (Imbali Biology students’ focus group interviews, 13 April 2000).

Furthermore, two students from a well resourced school (Grosvenor Boys’ High School] believed that the teaching methods in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* were better than teaching in the classroom because on television there are no interruptions and presenters explain until one understands, unlike in the classroom situation where there are interruptions from other students. Terrance explained this point succinctly:

No, completely different. [...] It’s like better than a teacher situation because there’s [...] no like class to interrupt. There’s no one to disrupt a class and breakdown communication. And when they teach as well, they explain it till they know you understand. Like a teacher will just stand there, this this this that that finished. If you learn too bad (Grosvenor Boys’ High School Biology students’ focus group interviews, 6 April 2000).

In the classroom, teachers sometimes teach in Zulu

A focus group participant also reported that the methods of teaching in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* and in the classroom were different because in class, teachers sometimes teach in Zulu. Zandile, a science student at Imbali region further added that this makes it difficult for students to answer questions in the examination as they are written in English (Imbali Science students’ focus group interviews, 14 April 2000, see Appendix F2).

Presenters put humour and show enthusiasm and interest in their teaching

Some students from well resourced schools (New Forest Secondary School, and Queensburgh Girls' High School) and mathematics students at Imbali region held that the teaching methods on *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* are better than classroom teaching because the presenters put humour and show enthusiasm and interest in what they are teaching and this catches their attention. An exchange between Bianca and Joe, supports this point best (Queensburgh Girls' High School English students' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000). Bianca stated that teaching methods in the programme were better than those used in the classroom because

They [presenters] put a lot of enthusiasm into what they're doing and sometimes you have teachers who don't do that and that's what you need. You need to be stimulated during your lessons and a teacher who doesn't enjoy what they're doing then there's no way you can enjoy what you're actually doing. But when you watch it on TV, they have a lot of energy and you can see they love what they're doing and it makes you interested and you wanna love what they're doing also (Queensburgh Girls' High School English students' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000).

To which Joe added "they [presenters] like have a joke in between which makes you laugh and which makes you more interested" (Queensburgh Girls' High School English students' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000). These results are in agreement with findings by Hart Research Associates (1996) who found that 10 to 17 year-old emphasised humour as an essential ingredient for a typical good show. Other studies support this finding (Pasquier, 1996; Nikken and van der Voort, 1997; Valkenburg and Jansen, 1999).

Presenters go into depth in their teaching and spend more time on one aspect

A few mathematics students at Port Natal High School believed that the teaching methods in the classroom and in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* were different in that in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, presenters go into more depth and spend more time on one thing, unlike at school where the teachers rush to finish the syllabus. In addition, they argued that in school one does not get a chance to really understand what they are being taught (Port Natal High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 5 April 2000, see Appendix F1). De Beer illustrated this best by contending that

There is a big difference. I think on TV as they said [other classmates in the focus group] they [presenters] go into it more deeply and then they spend more time on one thing. Here at school, they rush to finish the syllabus and you don't always get a chance to really understand that piece of work (Port Natal High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 5 April 2000).

Presenters did not get enraged when they are asked to repeat the same questions

An English student from Eshowe region (less resourced schools) was of the opinion that teaching in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was better than in the classroom because the presenters did not get enraged when they are asked to repeat the same questions. Fikile illustrated this point when she said: "I think television is better because that teacher doesn't get mad when you are repeating the same questions" (Eshowe English students' focus group interviews, 23 February 2000). This result implies that teachers in the classrooms get enraged when students ask them to repeat explanation of a question.

However, some teachers from Tongaat region related that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* teaching methods were not relevant to their school reality. They argued that in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* it was just talk and chalk and that in schools they have interaction with the students. Naidoo illustrated this point best when he said:

With the television it's obvious that they are just giving facts and information as Naidoo has said. And that doesn't work in a class, you've got to have a two-way interaction or meaningful interaction between various different pupils and the teachers themselves. And then [...] we would get something fruitful at the end of the lesson. Here [*Liberty Learning Channel Programme*] it's just one way and that's it. The phoning they have is to one pupil only and obviously [...] only that one pupil who called will benefit (Tongaat Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 8 May 2000).

3.2.2.5.2. Relevance of the examples

According to Reeves (1998 quoted in Zhang, 2001), in a good culturally balanced programme: materials are respectful of cultural, ethnic, sexual, and religious diversity; a balance of historical perspectives is represented that recognises the complexity underlying historical events, especially wars, and politics; gender inclusiveness is evident; a balanced perspective on the values and contributions of diverse cultures is

represented; images and icons are sensitive to cultural taboos and customs; an ethical perspective is presented that maintains that cultural practices should be respected unless they violate principles of basic humanity; ethnic groups are represented in ways that reflect the diversity within these groups; a balance of different cultures and societies is represented in images or texts; ethnic groups are represented in ways that reflect accurately their overall contributions to society; and ethnic pluralism based upon respect for differences are held forth as the ideal approach to societal development.

One of the aims of the present study was to seek participants' views on whether the examples given in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* were relevant to the realities of students and teachers. Findings showed that the most prevalent feeling was that all the examples were relevant to everyday life of the teachers and students (see Appendix F1 & F2). Several reasons were advanced for this assertion, which included: examples were syllabus-related; examples given were things students and teachers could identify in their environment; examples were relevant, but the language used was difficult for an average child; and examples were relevant at times, and will always be affected by the race of the presenter. These reasons will be unpacked in detail drawing representative comments from the focus group participant.

Examples were syllabus-related

The majority of the teachers and a host of students who participated in this study believed that the examples given in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* were relevant as they were syllabus-related or derived from the syllabus (see Appendix F1 and F2). An exchange between Dorinda and Roshni supports this point best (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). Dorinda state that "they [examples] are certainly in the syllabus, so they are relevant" (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). To which Roshni added "The work that is covered is definitely within the syllabus, it is relevant" (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

Among these teachers who indicated that the examples were relevant since they were syllabus related, some added that the examples were also applicable because they

were examination type questions. Such views could be said to be best illustrated in the following line from Nisha: “These examples are coming from the syllabus and it’s [...] the type of questions the student would [...] [get] in the exams. And so, yes, it’s relevant” (Grosvenor Boys’ High School Biology teachers’ focus group interviews, 6 April 2000). With regard to relevance of materials to learning, Bundage, Keane and Mackneson (1993) reported that students’ learning is enhanced when content is related to examples.

Examples given were things students and teachers could identify in their environment

Some of the teachers and students from both well resourced and less resourced schools held that the examples given in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* were relevant to students’ and teachers’ everyday life. Anne explained: “The little bit that we saw today seemed fine [...]. She used an example of cleaning up your rubbish bins and [...] link[ed] that to getting rid of waste products in the body. And I thought that was actually a good example and I think anyone can relate to that example” (Imbali Biology teachers’ focus group interview, 13 April 2000). In similar vein, Paulsen said: “Yes, I think they are. She gave us an image of a slum and it’s everywhere, we know slums” (Tongaat English students’ focus group interviews, 9 March 2000).

The above results supports Gottschalk’s (2003) recommendation that content for the most part should be taught using examples that relate to a context understood by the students.

Examples were relevant, but the language used was difficult for an average child

According to a science teacher at Tongaat region, the examples given in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* were relevant, but the language used was difficult for an average child. Naidoo explained that he “think[s] the examples are relevant but the language is difficult for an average child” (Tongaat Science teachers’ focus group interviews, 8 March 2000). Botha (1993: 10) also reported that there was a criticism that the language level of several educational publications in South Africa is too high to be relevant to ‘the poorest of the poor’. Also, Beulah Thumbadoo of the Easy Reader for Adults (ERA) Initiative deplored the lack of simple language writing.

Examples were relevant at times and will always be affected by the race of the presenter.

Dumisile, an English teacher from Eshowe region believed that examples given in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* were relevant at times and put forward the fact that examples will always be affected by the race of presenters. She opined that Whites will always give examples relevant to Whites and Blacks examples relevant to Blacks (Eshowe English teachers' focus group interviews, 25 February 2000, see Appendix F1). Dumisile explained this point succinctly:

They will be relevant at times, but they will always be affected by the fact that others are Black and others are White. And I cannot use examples which will suite a White learner I think, and the White person again cannot use examples which suites a Black learner. So, there will always [be] that (Eshowe English teachers' focus group interviews, 25 February 2000).

On the contrary, Shaun, an English teacher at Westville Boys' High School contended that the examples given in the English subject were not relevant to all students. He claimed that different provinces had different set books and whatever was discussed in *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was relevant to those students who were doing that set book under discussion (Westville Boys' High School English teachers' focus group interviews, 11 May 2000, see Appendix F1). This result corroborates the conclusions of the Department of Education (1996: 29) that educational provisions in South Africa occur almost entirely at a provincial level and that priorities and their implementation varies from province to province.

In the same light, some English students at Eshowe and Westville Boys' High School and science students at Imbali region said that sometimes the examples had no connection with them. Sbusiso illustrated this point best when he said: "sometimes they use things that you have never heard before or you have never seen or you don't even know" (Imbali Science students' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000).

The same criticism was held for the SABC produced teleschool programmes which were broadcast on CCV-TV⁶. The programme's contents seemed to be far removed from the real-life contexts of township pupils (Botha, 1993:17). Similarly, Chaudhary (1992), after viewing numerous educational programmes telecast for rural school children in India, found that the programmes depicted the urban environment and the content was directed to urban viewers, in terms of language, pacing and the concepts being taught. Also, an educational picture produced in Nigeria and aiming to instruct mothers on how to bathe a baby offended women in Uganda: "a child they said, should not be shown naked, his head must be washed first, not last" (Spurr, 1952: 58 quoted in Schramm, 1964: 43). Even what appears to be universally acceptable cartoons can cause trouble. For example, some Congo soldiers during World War II, meeting *Donald Duck* for the first time, threw stones at the screen because they thought they were being ridiculed: "Animals don't talk" they said. "whoever saw a duck in uniform?" (Doob, 1961:158).

It is noteworthy that those visual representations which include stimuli which are not directly related to a specific culture, block identification of the learners with the material and in some cases cause the learners rejection of the material (Escotet, 1984:147).

3.2.2.5.3. Representativeness of the presenters

Another issue examined in the present study was whether the presenters of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* were representative of the multi-racial South African society. A few teachers and students from the different regions claimed that the presenters were representative. Two reasons were given for this assertion. These reasons were: it did not matter who taught so long as they did it well; and what was taught in the programme helped all races. These issues will be discussed further using representative comments from the respondents.

It did not matter who taught so long as they did it well

⁶ CCV-TV stands for Contemporary Community Values Television. It was borne in January 1992 when TV 2, TV3 and TV 4 were merged. CCV-TV major policy objective was to broadcast programmes which would attract views from all cultural groups. A radical departure from previous policy which was based firmly on the language and ethnic differentiation of viewers (Mersham, 1998).

Some of the focus group participants related that the presenters of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* were representative of the multi-racial South African society because it did not matter who taught on the programme so long as they did it well (see Appendix F1 & F2). Reddy explained: "I think they are targeted to get the best that they can irrespective of whatever race is presenting so long as the material is getting across, that's what is important to the child. So, it doesn't matter who is presenting it" (Northwood High School Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 June 2000). Also, Khuliwe said: "I don't think it matters whether the presenter is White or Black so long as they are teaching" (Eshowe Biology students' focus group interviews, 22 February 2000).

What was taught in the programme helped all races

Also, some other participants argued that the presenters were symbolic of the South African society because what they taught on the programme helped all races (see F1 & F2). Marica noted that the presenters were representative of the South African society because "they talk to whoever phones-in and they don't really like give their all to a certain race, they give their all to whoever they talk to" (Queensburgh Girls' High School English students' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000). In similar vein, Seema said: "when they get telephone calls from schools in the rural areas, they seem to communicate with other races equally well as they would with [...] their own Whites" (Tongaat Science students' focus group interviews, 6 March 2000).

However, the prevalent feeling amongst the majority of the participants from the different regions under investigation was that the presenters of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* were not representative of the multi-racial South African society as they were all White (see Appendix F1 & F2). These participants further gave some drawbacks of having only White presenters. The negatives given for having only White presenters were: some participants do not understand the presenters English and the presenters do not understand students with language difficulties; White presenters made learners afraid to phone-in for fear of embarrassment; and having only White presenters perpetuated the myth that only Whites were the best teachers and Blacks were inferior. These drawbacks will be discussed in detail using representative comments from the participants.

Some participants do not understand the presenters' English and the presenters do not understand students with language difficulties

The problem of other races not understanding the presenters English and presenters not understanding students with language difficulties (mostly non-Whites) was raised by a mathematics student from Imbali region and two science teachers from Northwood High School and Tongaat region, respectively. Vincent informed that if the presenters were White only, then they were not representative. He further proposed that the Liberty Learning Channel has "to get other races because sometimes we don't understand their English" (Imbali Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 12 April 2000). Also, Bovey, a science teacher at Northwood High School, gave the proposition that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* should incorporate other races because William Smith had problems especially with pupils with language difficulties when interpreting what they were asking, as also reflected in the following selection from Chetty:

I think what could be useful is [...] [if] we had more different presenters, multi-racial presenters. [...]I think [...] pupils with language difficulties lots of the times when they phone-in, he (William Smith) is had problems interpreting what they are asking (Tonga Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000).

These results corroborate the conclusions of Nkala (1990: 92) that there is the problem of a heterophilious relationship or difference in background between the communicator and most of his audience members. Heterophilious communication situations are more difficult to handle than homophilicous ones in which the communicator and the audience have similar educational, cultural, social and other backgrounds. The greater the areas of commonness between the communicator and the audience the more effective the communication will be. With regard to the programme having only White presenters, it should be noted that just like all other fields, the profile of educational broadcasting practitioners still displays the apartheid past. The profile is overwhelmingly unrepresentative of South Africa, and more importantly of the overwhelming percentage of those who are engaged in teaching and learning endeavors. In essence, the profile of educational broadcasting practitioners does not reflect the social and cultural context of those who are being targeted by educational broadcasting. This must change for educational broadcasting to play a meaningful role in supporting efforts towards lifelong learning (framework

for educational programming in South Africa: final report of the task team for the transformation of educational broadcasting⁷).

White presenters made learners afraid to phone-in for fear of embarrassment

Having only White presenters on the programme was said to make students afraid of phoning-in lest they embarrass themselves. Chetty explained this point succinctly: “We need teachers that represent the multi-cultural society. I think with only White presenters, the kids are afraid of phoning to embarrass themselves” (Tongaat English teachers’ focus group interviews, 8 March 2000).

Having only White presenters perpetuated the myth that only Whites were the best teachers and Blacks were inferior

Zakhele, a mathematics teacher at Eshowe region laid open that having only White presenter at *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was perpetuating the myth that only Whites were the best teachers and Blacks were inferior teachers. Zakhele illustrated this point when he said: “I think they should too use Black people [...] if it is only the Whites who are presenting it they [pupils] will end up telling themselves that the Whites explain better than the Blacks. So they look down upon the Blacks themselves” (Eshowe Mathematics teachers’ focus group interviews, 24 February 2000).

The above results support the conclusion of Nieto (1993 quoted in Menkart, 1993) that students do not simply develop poor self-concepts out of the blue. Rather, students’ poor self-concepts are the result of policies and practices of schools and society that respect and affirm some groups while devaluing and rejecting others. It is imperative to note that therapeutic as well as reformist efforts verify the sad truth that in any system based on suppression, exclusion and exploitation, the suppressed, excluded and exploited unconsciously accept the evil image they are made to represent by those who are dominant (Erikson, 1968: 59).

⁷ A framework for educational programming in South Africa: final report of the task team for the transformation of educational broadcasting.
<http://www.icasa.org.za/Default.aspx?page=12658&moduledata=571> date accessed 22/4/2004.

3.2.2.5.4. The relevance of the language used in the programme and the possibility using of local languages.

It should be noted that in South Africa, the language(s) of learning and teaching in a public school must be (an) official language(s) (Department of Education, 1997). South Africa now has eleven official languages. The choice of languages in programme production should be based on educational need, appropriateness and the general constitutional principle that education should be available in any official language of choice. The then minister of Education Professor S.M.E Bhengu said: “My Ministry does not support language imperialism. We will not promote, under any circumstances, the use of only one of the official languages as the language of learning (medium of instruction) in all public schools. Language policy in education cannot thrive in an atmosphere of coercion. No language community should have reason to fear that the education system will be used to suppress it’s mother tongue” (Department of Education, 1997).

Therefore, one of the aims of this study was to seek to know the relevance of the medium of instruction used by *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* to the students and the possibility of using local languages. Findings indicated that the majority of the teachers from the different areas under study suggested that there was a need to use both English and local languages in teaching in order to help students understand (see Appendix F1). In the same light, several students from the different regions suggested that local languages should be used to: explain some terms to those who are not English first-language speakers; and for those who do not understand English language very well (see Appendix F2). For example, Zwelethu explained that “some terms can be explained in local languages just to help those who are not English first language speakers, but they have to write English” (New Forest Secondary School Science students’ focus group interviews, 23 March 2000). Also, Nokukhanya remarked: “sometimes it’s right to use local languages because other[s] don’t understand English very well because English is not their mother tongue” (Eshowe Biology students’ focus group interviews, 22 February 2000).

The above results seem to imply that the language of instruction on *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* is not relevant to students who are not English first language speakers and thus, the call for use of local languages in some instances.

However, several participants' from the different regions revealed that local languages should not be used in teaching at *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Two reasons were given for this assertion. These reasons were: Some English terms cannot translate to local languages without misleading students; and English should always be used as it was the language of instruction and examination. These reasons will be developed further using representative comments from the participants.

Some English terms cannot translate to local languages without misleading students

The fact that some terms or words cannot translate into local languages without misleading students was one of the reasons why several teachers from the different areas under investigation said that local languages should not be used on *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Bongiwe illustrated this point best by saying:

No, no, because there is no term for pressure in Zulu. Say 'umfutho', 'umfutho' [in] Zulu means many things. So it's good that they use English [...] and once you deviate from using English and use the Zulu terms for some scientific terms, you mislead the children (Imbali Science teachers' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000).

English Language should always be used, as it was the language of instruction and examination

Another sentiment held by many of the participants from the different regions under study was that English language should always be used on *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* as it was the language of instruction and examination (see Appendix F1 & F2). Heather explained:

There isn't at the moment a maths paper or science paper in Zulu, it is in English. I can't speak for the other provinces, so they gonna have to watch in English because they are taught through the medium of English. Otherwise they won't understand the terminology (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

Also, Vusi said: "the language they are using is right because it's the language that we are going to use when we write exams" (Imbali Biology students' focus group interviews, 13 April 2000).

Some of the participants who put forward that the programme should only use English language in their presentation, gave suggestions on how Liberty Learning Channel can try and cater for non-English speakers. These suggestions were: to use simple English and presenters to teach at a slow pace as some people do not understand English when they teach too fast; and to translate English to local languages. These propositions will be discussed in details drawing representative quotes from the respondents.

To use simple English

One way advanced by Lydia (English student Queensburgh Girls' High School) and Dodd (science student New Forest Secondary School) to trying and cater for non-English speakers was the use of simple English (see Appendix F2). Dodd expressed this point best when he said: "the language is fine, may be they can make it simple for those who don't understand it" (New Forest Secondary School Science students' focus group interviews, 23 March 2000). Similarly, Jenkins (1981) highlighted the importance of avoiding inappropriate metaphors and unnecessary complex constructions or technical terms and emphasised the importance of using plain language throughout a course to aid students' understanding. Also, Ervin-Tripp (1985 quoted in Hernández, 1990:142) suggests that teachers should use English in the classroom in ways that adhere to principles encompassing concepts such as the following: facilitate comprehension by keeping form and content as simple as possible; modifying language by simplifying sentence structures, repeating vocabulary.

To translate English to local languages

Another proposition by a science students at Eshowe region (less resourced) on how Liberty Learning Channel can try and cater for those who don't understand English was to translate the English programmes into local languages. Charlotte remarked: "sometimes their English is very difficult. It should be translated, and if [translated] in other languages, it [would] help students understand" (Eshowe Science students' focus group interviews, 23 February 2000).

However, from the above results it is evident that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* employs English only as the language of instruction, while South Africa has eleven official languages. Many people who speak these languages are clearly not adequately served by the broadcasting system (Department of communications, 1997). The situation is compounded by the fact that while services in English increase, a major part of the South African society does not use English as a language of communication and interaction in daily life (Department of communications, 1997). Yet the SABC (1996b: 24) argued that one of the factors taken into account in determining an equitable (but not equal) spread of languages was the research findings that the majority of all the viewers of all language groups prefer English as an alternative to home-language viewing (Mersham, 1998). In support to the use of English language as the medium of instruction at *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, William Smith argued that English is an international language and on a global scale, English is the language that gives access to economic success and social mobility (personal interview, 11 August 1999).

3.2.2.6. The Impact of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* on the South African Society

The criteria to be used in judging the effectiveness of a specific distance education project according to Smith (1987) are six kinds of indicators: the throughput of students (important in terms of effectiveness and cost-effectiveness); the acceptability of the graduates or successful completes to employers or other educational institutions; the distance education project status in the eyes of the community; the quality of distance education project materials and services; the extend to which the distance learning provision brings economic benefits to a country (for example, in initial training and upgrading; reaching rural areas; developing basic technical and vocational skills); and student reactions to their learning experiences (since these can encourage or deter other potential learners). The indicators about the distance education status in the eyes of the community and the extend to which the distance education learning provision brings benefits to a country were used as criteria in judge the impacts of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* to the society.

Therefore, in this study, the impact of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was assessed only amongst the teachers, and it was determined using the questions: “Does

Liberty Learning Channel Programme affect the community by promoting economic growth, reconstruction and development?; Does the programme promote national and regional identity?; Does the programme correct the educational imbalances of the past?; And can the programme be used as a vehicle to promote curriculum 2005, now 2021? (Appendix B, question 14). Findings on the participants' opinions on the impact of the programme to the community will be presented under the following themes: promotion of economic growth, reconstruction and development; promotion of national and regional identity; correction of the educational imbalances of the past; and promotion of curriculum 2005, now 2021.

3.2.2.6.1. Promotion of economic growth, reconstruction and development

Results on the question probing participants' opinions on whether the programme was supporting economic growth, reconstruction and development indicated that the great majority of the teachers believed that the programme was promoting economic growth, reconstruction and development in some ways (see Appendix F1). The programme was believed to promote economic growth, reconstruction and development because it contributed to manpower development; and was making certain expertise available to many people. These two points will be discussed in depth using representative comments from the participants.

Liberty Learning Channel programme contribution to manpower development

The opinion that the programme contributed to manpower development was held by several teachers from the different regions under investigation. These teachers felt that the programme contributed to manpower development by giving the child information which helped him / her get good results at the end, made the child have a lot to offer after graduating and entering the working world (see Appendix F1). The following selection from Healther could be taken to speak for them all:

Yes, it is going to improve the standard of work per pupil and the overall result in the end, its going to improve their productivity once they pass matric, keep them focused and make them a better student, better learner afterwards (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

Liberty Learning Channel Programme was making certain expertise available to many

The programme's provision of certain expertise to many of the South African people was held by some teachers from the well resourced school and Tongaat region as away of promoting economic growth, reconstruction and development (see Appendix F1). These teachers opined that the programme was making certain expertise available to many people, although not reaching people without television. Clark, illustrated this point best when she said:

It is certainly making a certain amount of expertise available to more people. But I' am just concerned that the people who need it the most don't have electricity, there is a problem. But at least I suppose you can reach people who do have electricity and do not have teachers in the classroom all the time. They are issuing some knowledge, some expertise in reaching more people, so I assume it is contributing to all that (Westville Girls' High School Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 15 June 2000).

The above results give the impression that majority of the teachers felt that the programme was contributing to economic growth, reconstruction and development to some extend, with a few of these teachers showing concern on the reach of the programme to those who do not have resources. It should be noted that the education of the citizens of a country is considered as one of the key factors of the development of the nation. Different econometric models have shown that education, by increasing the productivity of the manpower is one of the three factors of production in addition to the capital factor and management (UNESCO, 1997: 50). People are henceforth placed at the centre of development, and their access to knowledge, to information and to all the resources for enabling them to live a more humane life has become the sole criterion for appraising the level of development (UNESCO, 1997: 167). Amartya Sen, India's Noble-prize winning economist (1999) argued that basic learning drives economic growth, it allows for lower fertility rates (see also Monsen, 1999) and it helps women to raise healthy children and farmers to reap bigger crops.

3.2.2.6.2. Promotion of national and regional identity

It should be noted that for the present study, regional and national identity were measured in terms of the reach and the target audience of the programme (whether the programmes reaches the whole nation or certain parts of the country and whether it is

targeted to all South African matric students or certain matric students). It is noteworthy that a number of studies have convincingly shown the centrality of mass media in the formation of national identity (Cardiff & Ascannell, 1987; Buscomb, 1993; Hayes, 1996; Van der Bulck and van Poecke, 1996). Morley (1996b: 328) wrote that the “magic carpet” of broadcasting technologies plays a fundamental role in promoting national unity at a symbolic level, linking individuals and their families to the “centre” of national life, offering the audience an image of itself and of the nation as a knowable community, a wider public world beyond the routines of a narrow existence, to which these technologies give symbolic access.

Also, apart from the educational programmes directed at resolving the divisive issues, broadcasting, especially television has another value dimension in unification by virtue of the ability of people from various parts of the country to watch or listen to the same programmes at the same time and to be informed of the same (often national) events under the same circumstances (Aniebona, 1990: 115; Hulté, 1995a quoted in McQuail and Siune, 1998: 23). This creates a sense of belonging to one community, and to some degree, a sense of (vicarious) participation. Also, according to UNESCO (1997:183), distance education is of great importance to a multi-ethnic and multi-national country for national unity and social cohesion. In this study, it was clear that only a few teachers from all the regions under study felt that the programme promoted national identity. These teachers were of the opinion that the programme was promoting national identity as it was serving everyone. Naresh noted that the programme was: “reaching all the audience and probably provinces and most of the questions are common. So, you can’t say its favouring one province or the other” (Tongaat Mathematics teachers’ focus group interviews, 7 March 2000).

Also, Healther explained that “education does [promote national identity] because we all go in that channel [Liberty Learning Channel]. [...] I mean everybody wants to be educated as well as they can be, so its very much in national interests to have anything that stimulates that or education” (Northlands Girls’ High School Mathematics teachers’ focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

A science teacher from a well resourced school was indecisive on whether the programme promoted national identity or not, because indirectly there was

discrimination in that those who are not good at English were made to feel inferior to those good at the language. Bovey said:

I think there is a lot to do with discrimination because we have got students phoning from all the parts asking questions on the varied sort of broken English and the pupils who speak English have the advantage like a school like this [Northwood High School]. Instead of [...] unifying they're actually making some feel superior and others inferior indirectly. One thing may be they think all the pupils are on the same boat and another set is that some people are more superior than the others. So, it is a yes or no situation (Northwood High School Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 June 2000).

Language problem amongst South African learners was also highlighted by Kamper (1993), who reported the fact that large numbers of learners were handicapped by inadequate language proficiency. He further argued that the problem manifests itself most clearly in the inability to use the medium of instruction, usually English, creatively.

On the contrary, the great majority of the participants' maintained that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was not endorsing national identity but in some ways supported regional identity. Several reasons were given for the above assertion. These reasons were: few people understood what the presenters were teaching because they spoke or taught in English; the presenters were not representative of the multi-racial South African Society; the programme was for selected pupils as majority of the students in the rural areas did not have television sets; and the programme tended to teach according to Gauteng style. These reasons will be discussed further drawing representative comments from the participants.

Few people understood what the presenters were teaching because presenters taught in English

The programme was believed to promote regional identity by a biology teacher at Imbali region as few people understood what the presenters were presenting because they spoke or taught in English. Vusi explained that: "very few people understand what she [presenter] is saying because she is speaking in English. So it reaches very few, a very few small percentage of our nation" (Imbali Biology teachers' focus group

interviews, 13 April 2000). These results imply that the programme was best understood by English speakers.

The presenters were not representative of the multi-racial South African society

The programme was said not to promote national identity by several teachers from the less resourced schools as the presenters were believed not to be representative of the multi-racial South African society. These teachers asserted that it was not promoting national identity because there were no Black faces among the presenters. Vusi illustrated this point by saying: "Let them just bring Black faces there and we can say it's promoting nationhood" (Eshowe English teachers' focus group interviews, 25 February 2000). Also, Subi explained that "to develop a nice identity, you must be reflective of what exists in that nation and just only White presenters doesn't look good, doesn't do anything to us" (Tongaat Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 7 March 2000).

These results corroborate the conclusions of the South African Ministry for Posts, Telecommunications and Broadcasting (1997) that the quest to construct a vibrant and democratic dispensation fostering a national identity, equality and a respect for the fundamental rights of all South Africans as entrenched in the new constitution is far from realisation. South Africa, in many ways, is still shackled by its past: a society deeply divided along ethnic, racial, class, gender and cultural lines (see also, Knight, 2001). These divisions continue to define the essence of the social, political, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the creation of a democratic and completely inclusive society. The Ministry further argues that despite the gains of the last few years in opening up the broadcasting system and making it more reflective of all South Africans, the legacy of apartheid is very evident in the broadcasting system.

The programme was for selected pupils, as majority of the pupils in the rural areas did not have television sets

A number of teachers from the different regions under study were of the opinion that the programme did not encourage national identity because it was for selected pupils, as majority of students in the rural areas did not have television sets. An exchange between Padayachee and Dipsy supports this point best (Tongaat Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000). Padayachee stated that the programme "is for

selected number of pupils in my view. Because majority of students in rural areas don't have a television" (Tonga Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000). To which Dipsy added "just [to] have a programme which is not sort of accessible to most people in the nation [...] it's not gonna be a unifying feature (Tonga Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000).

The programme tended to teach according to Gauteng⁸ style

Clark, a biology teacher at Westville Girls' High School was of the opinion that the programme upheld regional identity. She argued that the programme tended to teach according to Gauteng style and that Gauteng examines differently. Clark explained this succinctly:

I think the way that she does some of the things is similar to the way Gauteng does it as opposed to the way Natal does it. [...] they tend to have comparison between things we don't even think they are important [...] the whole emphasise in the way Gauteng examines is different to the way KwaZulu-Natal⁹ examines. We do a lot more practical, a lots of hand-on stuff than Gauteng does [...] because they don't do that much practical work, the style of their paper is different. And she tends to teach according to the Gauteng style. So, I presume we are talking of regional identity (Westville Girls' High School Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 15 June 2000).

In regard to the programme being geared more towards the Gauteng province, the above results appears to be in agreement with William Smith's assertion that Liberty Learning Channel focuses more on Gauteng syllabus as 65 per cent of all the matrices are in Gauteng (personal interview, 6 July 2000).

3.2.2.6.3. Correction of the educational imbalances of the past

It is noteworthy that the South African state is attempting to establish a national cultural public sphere which promotes new forms of cultural diversity in a society of marked economic inequality, highly politicised patterns of cultural difference, and against the background of a history in which cultural pluralism was championed by the apartheid state as a means of justifying systematic discrimination in resource allocations. One clear break with the past is registered by the fact that the equal

⁸ Gauteng is one of the provinces in South Africa. It harbours the economic capital of South Africa, Johannesburg City.

recognition of diverse cultures is now premised upon the formal political equality of all citizens enshrined in the new South African Constitution (Barnett, 2000: 53). Nonetheless, since patterns of cultural difference remain bound up with inequalities in economic power, the merely formal recognition of diversity, in the absence of efforts to redress past imbalances in resource allocation, would only work to reproduce cultural differences as social inequality (Nixon, 1994: 205-208). With regard to addressing the educational imbalances of the past, this study set to investigate on participants' views on whether *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was correcting the educational imbalances of the past.

Several responses were given pertaining to this issue. A few participants opined that the programme was correcting the educational imbalances of the past. These teachers held that the programme was correcting imbalances of the past because it was serving everyone in the society, there was teaching on television unlike before, the programme could be a resource for schools with limited facilities and underqualified teachers, and if the disadvantaged students had access to television sets and electricity (see Appendix F1). These issues will be discussed in details using representative comments from the respondents.

The programme was serving everyone in the society

Some teachers from Tongaat and Eshowe regions (less resourced schools) opined that the programme was rectifying the educational disparities of the past to a certain extent because it was serving everyone in the society. Biyela illustrated this point best when he said: "Yes, it does help all other races, because the programme is broadcast for all" (Eshowe Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 24 February 2000). Similarly, Young *et al.* (1980: 25-26) reported that the universality of broadcast might reduce the differences between good schools and bad, since it can share the resources of a district between rich and poor, between every school and every child.

There was teaching on television unlike before

The programme was said to remedy the educational disproportions of the past by a biology teacher from Imbali region because of the fact that there was teaching on television, which never used to be there before. Vusi noted that the programme was

⁹ KwaZulu-Natal is another province in South Africa. Situated on the eastern side of the country.

correcting the educational inequalities of the past because “there were no televisions [education in past], so they [learners] only had to rely on the teachers and the board, sometimes radio lessons and then it improved on that. Television is much more [...] than a radio and a teacher. So it's actually correcting some [disparities] especially because [...] it's presented on television” (Imbali Biology teachers’ focus group interviews, 13 April 2000).

The programme was a resource for schools with limited facilities and underqualified teachers

Liberty Learning Channel Programme was also believed by a few teachers from Queensburgh Girls’ High School, Imbali and Eshowe regions, to correct the educational imbalances of the past since it could be a resource for schools with limited facilities and underqualified teachers. Anne noted that the programme: “is helping because there [are] a lot of imbalances that still exist that haven't been corrected. And something like this [the programme] is a resource that can be used by a school that has limited facilities. And that would help” (Eshowe Biology teachers’ focus group interviews, 25 April 2000). Also, Msomi said: “Of course, it is correcting the mistakes that they did in the past because in our schools we were not provided with materials for doing experiments” (Eshowe Science teachers’ focus group interviews, 24 February 2000). These results corroborate the conclusions of Mayo (1989) that television offers in some case a proven means for increasing access to education and for upgrading the quality of instructions.

The programme was correcting Imbalance of the past if disadvantaged students had access to television sets and electricity

Several teachers from both well resourced and less resourced schools, related that the programme was amending the educational inequalities of the past if the disadvantaged students had access to television sets and electricity. These teachers were of the opinion that if students had the above facilities they were getting expert teaching. The following passage from Subi could be taken to speak for them all:

In a way those pupils that didn't have it [resources] in the past, a'm talking about all the disadvantaged communities [...] as long as they have this access to TV, they will be able to understand sections clearly well for the kind of explanation they give. They are expert teachers. So it is going a long way in

trying to do that [correct imbalances] (Tongaath Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 7 March 2000).

However, the most prevalent feeling from the great majority of the participants was that the programme was not fixing the educational discrepancies of the past. A number of reasons were given for this argument. These grounds were: participants did not think that the programme was rectifying the problem of overcrowded classrooms and shortage of qualified teachers; all presenters were White; and those without television sets were missing out and those with the resources did not use or need the programme. These reasons will be discussed further drawing representative comments from the participants.

Participants did not think that the programme was rectifying the problem of overcrowded classrooms and shortage of qualified teachers

The programme was thought not to correct the educational imbalances of the past by several teachers from both well resourced and less resourced school. These teachers held that in the past schools were unequal in terms of resource allocation and there were no properly qualified teachers in some of the schools. Further, these teachers did not think that the programme was addressing the imbalances because classes were still overcrowded and shortage of qualified teachers was rife. Additionally, they argued that 90 per cent of the Black schools did not have televisions (see Appendix F1). Naicker expressed this point best when he said:

If you look at the imbalances of the past, you are looking at [...] unrelational schools and there were no properly qualified teachers in schools and things like that. I don't think the programme is [...] exactly addressing [this] because [...] classes are still experiencing a large shortage of qualified teachers, overcrowding and the problems are outstanding. I mean you can't say that this programme, a programme like this will address when 90 per cent of the Black schools don't even have a television (Tongaath English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000).

With regard to the problem of lack of qualified teachers, in 2001, a teacher audit showed that there were 58, 000 under-qualified teachers in the education system (Harper, 2004). Pertaining the ownership of television sets, statistics from the SouthAfrica.info report/South African Advertising Research Foundation (2002) showed that almost 45 per cent of rural households have television sets and urban

television penetration was 84 per cent of all households. Also, Toby Mendel in his study, entitled *Public service broadcasting. A comparative legal survey: South Africa* (2000) reported low rates of television ownership in South African rural areas. Thus, it can be inferred that some schools in South Africa have no access to television sets.

All presenters were White

A number of teachers from Tongaat and Eshowe region reported that the programme was not correcting the educational one-sidedness of the past because all the presenters were White. An exchange between Naidoo and Chetty supports this point best (Tongaats Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000). Naidoo said: "I think it is not doing much so long as we don't have multi-racial presenters" (Tongaats Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000). To which Chetty added "Most of the presenters that have seen even when I have sort of glazed at other parts of physical science [and] other subjects have been White [...] definitely that doesn't correct the imbalances of the past" (Tongaats Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000).

All the teachers who participated in the Eshowe English teachers focus group interviews put forward that the programme was promoting the educational disparities of the past. They opined that having only White presenters was perpetuating these inequities, as evidenced in the following extract from Eshowe English teachers' focus group interviewees:

Dumisile: It promotes the imbalances of the past.

Eunice: It promotes?

Dumisile: Yes.

Eunice: Why do you say that it promotes?

Dumisile: I am afraid I will keep on repeating what I was saying to you. The White presenters.

Eunice: It's a sign of we are still in the past.

Dumisile: Yes.

Phumelele: The same

Vusi: Same (Eshowe English teachers' focus group interviews, 25 February 2000).

These results corroborate the conclusions that just like all other fields, the profile of educational broadcasting practioners still display the apartheid past. The profile is overwhelmingly unrepresentative of South Africa, and more importantly, of the

overwhelming percentage of those who are engaged in teaching and learning endeavors (A framework for educational programming in South Africa: final report of the task team for the transformation of educational broadcasting¹⁰).

Those without television sets were missing out and those with the resources did not use or need the programme

A few teachers from well resourced schools and Tongaat region were of the opinion that the programme was not adjusting the educational imbalances of the past as those who did not have television sets were missing out and those with the resources did not use or need it. Dhoothat illustrated this point best when he said:

I don't think it's really doing it because it is not reaching the masses. I can say that if everyone has got television, if every house has television, then it's correcting the imbalances. The disadvantaged people don't have televisions or the resources, those who have the resources do not use or need it. So I don't think its correcting the imbalances (Northwood High School Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 June 2000).

3.2.2.6.4. Promotion of curriculum 2005, now 2021

It is imperative to note that curriculum 2005¹¹, now called curriculum 2021 (Grey, 2000) has as its foundation, the establishment of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) and the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA), both of which were officially established in Act No. 58 of 1995 with the intention of giving structural weight to efforts to transform education at school level by moving from content-based to outcome-based education (OBE). Curriculum 2021 seeks to harness the potential of OBE, using it to build better quality educational provision at school level. It seeks to shift the focus from teacher input (instructional offerings or syllabuses expressed in terms of content) to focusing on the outcomes of the learning process (Department of Education, 1997: 32). The intention of curriculum 2021 is to create nationally agreed outcomes and criteria for assessing the achievement of these

¹⁰ A framework for educational programming in South Africa: final report of the task team for the transformation of educational broadcasting.
<http://www.icasa.org.za/Default.aspx?page=12658&moduledata=571> date accessed 22/4/2004.

¹¹ Curriculum 2005 was renamed 2021 after the Department of Education foresaw that it was not possible to implement curriculum 2005 to all the grades by 2005 (Grey, 2000).

outcomes, with a view to ensuring common recognition and acceptance of qualifications and building greater flexibility into the education system in terms of where and how learning takes place and is assessed (Butcher, 1998). Equally though, the success of its implementation is a crucial element in the transformation of South African education and training. One of the things the present study tried to establish was whether *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* could be used as a vehicle to promote curriculum 2005, now 2021.

From the results obtained from focus group interviews, it was evident that the great majority of the teachers from the different regions under study felt strongly that the programme could be used to impart information on outcome-based education (OBE) to teachers and how to implement OBE. The views of these teachers could be said to be best illustrated by Healthier in the following:

Of course, it can be used because [...] probably [...] they [could] run a programme for teachers and show them how to approach this OBE or curriculum 2005 [...] But [...] certainly as an aid to promote that [OBE] and to give teachers ideas (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 23 may 2000).

Similarly, the use of educational television for making teachers aware of teaching and learning innovations etc. has been reported in the Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET) India, and as well as the Doordarshan Kendra, Bombay (Chaudhary, 1992).

Some teachers from Eshowe and Tongaat region (less resourced) held that the programme could be used to support outcome-based education by helping teachers to be better prepared and learners to cope with the changes that came with curriculum 2005. They added that teachers are confused about OBE and that they do not expect watching television and two or three workshops on OBE to enable them to know the whole syllabus (see Appendix F1). Malinga said:

May be it can [...] it is the first time I am exposed to OBE, I am confused at times. I am not familiar with what is going on. I find that sometimes on television you get some information about OBE. Teachers themselves are confused, we need to address that problem. And we can't expect watching television and two or three workshops [to enable teachers] to control the whole

syllabus and expect it to work. We have to re-visit and re-think the entire process [...] So if it could assist teachers to be better prepared and learners to cope better with change, obviously the change is in terms of instructions, curriculum etc. By all means it could help (Tongaat English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000).

Also, a science teacher at Imbali region related that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* could be used as vehicle to promote curriculum 2005 because in most cases, those training teachers on outcome-based education in workshops knew nothing about it. Bongiwe explained that the programme could be used to promote curriculum 2005 because "in most cases when you go to courses or to workshops about this OBE, [...] the people who are doing it they don't know it. If you go on asking them, they end up saying "oh! I was just put here I don't know anything"" (Imbali Science teachers' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000).

Similarly, in Pennsylvania's OBE efforts, one of the errors made during the implementation involved insufficient information from OBE own supporters. The State Board and the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) had not clearly defined what OBE actually was. More importantly, they had not explained what OBE was not (McQuiade, 1994 quoted in Boyd, Lugg and Zahorchak, 1996). Outcome-based education proponents also hindered the reform effort, firstly by dismissing the opposition and then by providing inadequate and inconsistent information (McQuiade, 1994 quoted in Boyd, Lugg and Zahorchak, 1996). They lacked a systematic plan to shape their campaign and to cultivate grassroots support. The reform proposal was not only vague but lacked supporting evidence, which alarmed many individuals from diverse political /or professional viewpoints. With regard to teachers being confused about OBE, King and Bosma (1991) reported that the move towards outcome-based education challenged Minnesota educators, as one teacher put it: "I am working to understand the concept of outcome-based education, let alone implementing it".

However, according to Finn (1990), switching to an outcome-based system presents an imposing challenge to educators. Many of the "implementation pioneers" referred to in Spady and Marshall (1991: 67) struggle daily to make sense of what exactly OBE should look like in their schools. It should be noted that all social change is accompanied by tension, but when change is accomplished, tension is often relieved. This was the observation of Rao (1963) in a study of two Indian villages, of which

one had begun to modernise and the other was on the verge of doing so. The village in which change was imminent was full of tension and frustration; the other was quieter, busier, more satisfied, and more purposeful. For the success of implementation of OBE, extensive staff development is required, as is the ongoing monitoring of progress (King and Evans, 1991).

However, several participants from the different regions were of the opinion that the programme could be used as a vehicle to advance curriculum 2005, but felt that its present format, which was just giving information, could not further outcome-based education. They suggested that the programme has to adjust its format to be able to support outcome based-education. Shaun said:

I don't because if it's the same curriculum 2005. [...] pupils [...] exploring or taking more responsibility for their own learning, but the emphasis [...] here as I said earlier is [...] the teacher who is the person who holds knowledge [...] And I think that curriculum 2005 is going away from that (Westville Boys' High School English teachers' focus group interviews, 11 May 2000).

Also, Reddy explained: "This outcome-based education is based on interacting and learning, and with experience. I don't think television is good for that because it is basically having lectures delivered to you" (Northwood High School Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 June 2000). With regard to the lecture method, Macdonald-Ross (1979), and Sewart *et al.* (1984) reported that many teachers in both conventional and distance education systems continues to use the traditional or teacher-centred (transmission) method of teaching. Similarly, (Prinsloo, 1999) reported that transmission education has dominated the formal education arena in South Africa.

Therefore, as said by some of the above teachers, Liberty Learning Channel presenters need to change their teaching methods to methods enshrined in the outcome-based education. Middleton (1997) spoke pointedly of the outcome of failing to keep information current, maintaining that an educational programme or course is an expensive endeavor, but is not as expensive as a programme that has failed to meet its objectives of imparting the skills or knowledge learners need to apply to their jobs, and lives.

3.2.2.7. Suggestions for the improvement of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

It is vital to note that as with all aspects of education, continuing research, evaluation and development, research is necessary for improvement of distance education provision. Distance education providers need to have effective research as the basis of improving the quality of their performances (South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996). In this regard, it was one of the objectives of this study to elicit teachers' and students' views on ways to improve *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Ways of improving the programme were investigated using the questions: "Could you suggest ways of making *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* more appealing, effective and more useful for teaching and learning?; If you could change one thing about *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, what could it be?; and What kind of presenters would improve the programme? (Appendix B, questions 16, 17, 18 and 19). It vital to mention that most of the suggestions given for the improvement of the programme were related to the same issues participants mentioned earlier as the reasons and factors which made them not utilise *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. These factors could probably partly explain why *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* has low viewership amongst the youth. For presentation purposes, results will be grouped into the following headings: suggestions commonly held by participants from the different areas under investigation; suggestions from the well resourced schools; and suggestions from the less resourced schools.

3.2.2.7.1. Suggestions commonly held by participants from the different areas under investigation

Suggestions commonly held by participants from the different regions were to: change the time slot; have multi-racial presenters; give a detailed timetable to schools in advance; have a better advertising campaign; improve the presentation style; incorporate more practicals; include other subjects in the broadcast; use humour while presenting the lesson; supply the *Sowetan* supplement free to all; and have learners in the studio. These suggestions will be unpacked using representative comments from the respondents.

To change the time slot

On the question probing teachers' and students' suggestions on how to make the programme more appealing, effective and more useful for teaching and learning, findings indicated that majority of the participants from the different regions proposed that the time slot of the broadcast should be changed. The time slot was also named by the majority of participants as one aspect of the programme they would change if given a chance (see Appendix F1 & F2). Results discussed in earlier sections of the study seem to indicate that the time slot of the programme was the most disliked aspect of the programme.

To have multi-racial presenters

A great majority of the teachers from the different areas under investigation proposed that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* should have multi-racial presenters (see Appendix F1), with several students from the different regions relating that they would change the composition of the presenters to include other races if given the power to change one thing on the programme. For example, S'bu suggested that Liberty Learning Channel should try "to accommodate the multi-racial society by mixing the presenters" (Imbali Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 12 April 2000). Muzizwe noted that one thing he would change about the programme was to "to change the presenters to be more representative" (Westville Boys' High School students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000).

One of the reasons given for the call for presenters to be representative of the multi-racial society was because learners would be motivated to watch the programme if they saw someone of the same race, someone they could identify with and not give the impression that only Whites know the subject. Anne explained this when she said:

If I see somebody of the same [race], who looks the same as me, and they know their work then it means I can also know the work. If I only see the person with his White face all the time [...] you start to feel like oh! It's only them who can really know the stuff and [...] it's the socialisation. It's really important that the teachers be sometimes the same as the pupils (Imbali Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 13 April 2000).

To give a detailed timetable to schools in advance

Giving timetable to schools in advance, with details of the subjects to be taught and when these subjects will be taught was another proposition put forward by a few mathematics teachers from Northlands Girls' High School, Gelofte High School and Science teachers from Eshowe region (see Appendix F1). Regarding the issue of issuing timetable to school, Morris proposed:

I think [...] they should [...] notify the schools, give them a programme well in advance of what subjects they are going to tackle and when they are going to tackle those subjects. [Then] the maths department we could inform our pupils [...] in advance that they should watch that particular programme (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

To have a better advertising campaign

Having a better advertising campaign was another suggestion advanced by some participants from the different areas under investigation, with a few students from the different regions and some mathematics teachers from Northlands Girls' High School mentioning the advertising campaign as one of the aspects of the programme they would change (see Appendix F2). Some of the teachers advised that Liberty Learning Channel should advertise the programme not only on television, but also through writing to schools. These teachers too argued that this information would enable teachers to inform the learners about the programme (see Appendix F1). Healther illustrated this by contending that "very much a good promotion programme is needed. Promotion for it [programme should] [...] also be backed up by stuff in writing to schools not just on the television" (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

In terms of one thing about the programme participants would change, Marica replied as follows: "Better advertisement of the programme. Like when they're having it and what grade they're doing and the subjects" (Queensburgh Girls' High School English students' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000).

To improve the presentation style

Some teachers and students from the different areas under study made the proposition that the presentation style on *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* should be changed. Presentation style was also listed as one of the aspects of the programme these teachers and students would change if given the mandate. These students and teachers who suggested that the presentation style to be changed argued that at the moment the presentation style was just like in the classrooms situation and learners would not be motivated to watch it since they would see it as an extension of the classroom. For the improvement of the programme, Evania suggested:

I think that the methods they use [...] when you are sitting down and watching it as everyone said here, for like 2 minutes you just gonna leave because its more like school and you need something that like attracts your attention” (Northlands Girls’ High School Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

Similarly, several teachers from Tongaat and multi-racial schools reported that they would change the presentation style and use different ways of presenting such as graphics and special effects (see Appendix F1). Chetty explained:

I think they should change the approach because I think when you are viewing television to be looked at as a form of learning certainly, but also as a form of entertainment [...] that’s why most people sit around the television [...] the people in television can come up with so many different types of special effects, graphics or mappings (Tongaat Science teachers’ focus group interviews, 8 March 2000).

To incorporate more practicals

A science teacher from Tongaat region suggested that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* should incorporate more practicals in it’s teaching. He further pointed out that there were some practicals they were not equipped to do in their schools and *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* could help in that regard. Chetty said:

Every time I have seen it, [...] one of the things I have noticed is the absence of practicals. She does practicals occasionally but [...] it is not like the norm and I think [...] for me as a teacher what I would use personally is like some of the practicals that [...] we are not equipped to deal with. I think a lot of practicals need to be done (Tongaat Science teachers’ focus group interviews, 8 March 2000).

To include other subjects in the broadcast

Also, the inclusion of more subjects as part of the broadcast was proposed by an English student at Eshowe and Queensburgh Girls' High School. Some mathematics and English students from Eshowe reported that one thing they would change on the programme would be the subject broadcasts by including other subjects. Khelekani pointed out: "I think the guy has to include other subjects" (Eshowe English students' focus group interviews, 23 February 2000). Also, Indira said that the programme should broadcast "More grade 12 subjects" (Queensburgh Girls' High School English students' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000).

To use humour while presenting the lesson

Another suggestion given by some students from the different regions was the use of humour while presenting the lessons. These students were of the opinion that humour catches the attention and makes students enjoy the lesson. The best example of this proposition was expressed by Simphiwe when he explained that the presenters "should add humour [in their teaching] because most people will like it and it keeps their attention, so I think they should add more jokes" (New Forest Secondary School Science students' focus group interviews, 23 March 2000).

To supply the Sowetan supplement free to all

Two mathematics students from Port Natal High School and a science student at Imbali region advised that Liberty Learning Channel print supplement should be supplied free for all. Chantel explained that it would be of help to have the supplement "free for all" (Port Natal High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 5 April 2000). Also, Thobeka said: "and those who [...] don't have the money to buy [...] the *Sowetan*. I think their questions, they should put in the newspaper that is free-*Echo*" (Imbali Science students' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000).

To have learners in the studio

Another idea suggested by some students and teachers from the different regions under investigation was that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* should have learners in the studio. Some of these participants also said that one way they would

change the programme if given a change was to put learners in the studio. In connection to suggestion for improving the programme, Reddy said: “they should like invite some pupils and probably a class there and show it live to us. Where students ask questions and write answers on the board [and] drawing diagrams” (Tongaat English students’ focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). With regard to one thing participants would change if given a chance, Zama replied: “Have a group of students live in the studio” (Eshowe Biology teachers’ focus group interviews, 25 February 2000).

3.2.2.7.2. Suggestions by participants from the well resourced schools

Suggestions for the improvement of the programme given by participants from well resourced schools were: to get a biology presenter who is more accurate in the subject content; to distribute the supplement through other newspapers besides the *Sowetan*; to make the supplement available to schools for students to buy; and presenters to be changed to people who are familiar with new teaching methods and the way education system is changing in South Africa. These issues will be discussed below.

To get a biology presenter who is more accurate in the subject content

A suggestion from a biology teacher from Westville Girls’ High School was that Liberty Learning Channel should get a biology presenter who was more accurate in the subject content. The same respondent also proclaimed that she would change the biology presenter if given the opportunity (Westville Girls’ High School Biology teachers’ focus group interviews, 15 June 2000, see Appendix F1).

To distribute the supplement through other newspapers besides the Sowetan

The proposition that Liberty Learning Channel supplement should be circulated through other newspapers apart from the *Sowetan* was put forward by two mathematics students from Port Natal High School. An exchange between Gina and Celeste supports this point (Port Natal High School Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 5 April 2000). Gina stated:

I think perhaps the [...] supplement [is] only published in the *Sowetan*. Perhaps if they could distribute them to a couple of more newspapers [...] more local newspapers and everything, but you get an indicator at home. So it

won't be [...] just a couple of big ones perhaps" (Port Natal High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 5 April 2000).

To which Celeste added "I think that they should may be publish it in more local newspapers not only in the *Sowetan*" (Port Natal High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 5 April 2000).

To make the supplement available to schools for students to buy

Again, another student from Port Natal High School put the proposition that the *Sowetan* supplement should be made available to schools where students can buy it. De Beer said: "also the newspaper idea, its [...] better if they can may be make it available to schools where students can buy it. [...] that way it [the supplement] would be spread more widely" (Port Natal High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 5 April 2000).

Presenters to be changed to people who are familiar with new teaching methods and the way education system is changing in South Africa

A mathematics student at Northlands Girls' High School expressed that the presenters should be changed to people who are familiar with the new teaching methods and the way education system was changing in South Africa (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). Kirthanya remarked:

I think the presenters need to be changed. May be not [...] to younger people because we do need an experienced [people] when we are dealing with something which is being taught to the whole of South Africa. But [to] people [who] are also in tune with the new teaching methods, with the way that education is changing, those are the people who would appeal to and their teaching methods would be more relevant to what we learn at school (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

Other aspects of the programmes some students from well resourced schools mentioned they would change if given the chance were to have a panel of presenters; and to use a youth approach in programming, design and presentation of the programme. These aspects will be discussed drawing representative comments from the interviewees.

To have a panel of presenters

Marica, an English student at Queensburgh Girls' High School reported that one thing she would change about *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* if given the onus was the presentation format by having a panel of presenters. She opined that a panel of presenters would help in getting different views and opinions on the same poem (Queensburgh Girls' High School English students' focus group interviews, 9 June 2000, see Appendix F2).

To use a youth approach in programming, design and presentation of the programme

Another student related that one thing she would change about the programme was it's programming, design and presentation approach by adopting a youthful approach. Staci said that she would change the programming and design to the format of a chat show, with a lot of young people because she found that she learned better when her friends teach her or when they learn together (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). Staci said:

I think that there is need for change though. May be a more youthful approach not necessarily young presenter, but may be presenting it in a different form as a chat show with a whole lot of young people. I found that I learn best if my friends teach me or we learn together (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

3.2.2.7.3. Suggestions by participants from the less resourced schools

Focus group participants from the less resourced school suggested that Liberty Learning Channel should: go out to schools and film there; dramatise poetry, use pictures and role play; give examples that rural people can relate to; repeat the broadcast so that it can cater for those who are in school during the broadcast; to shorten the length of the programme; presenters to slow the pace of teaching; to get young presenters; and the content being taught on the programme to coincide with what is being done at schools. These suggestions will be unpacked using representative comments from the participants.

To go out to schools and film there

A proposition by some teachers from Tongaat region was that Liberty Learning Channel should go out to the schools and film there and involve students in their filming. Some of the above teachers and a science student from Eshowe related that one way they would change the programme if given the opportunity was by filming in schools. Pillay's reply to the question on ways of improving the programme was: "I think the suggestion from Mr Prishnar was very good, where we could actually visit some [...] schools, transmit some in classroom itself" (Tongaat Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 8 May 2000). In regard to one thing participants would change if given onus to do so, Govender said: "I think may be their setting could be changed, away from the studio to the school and involve the pupils" (Tongaat English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000).

To dramatise poetry, use pictures and role-play

Another thought put forward by English teachers from Eshowe region was that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* should dramatise poetry, use pictures and role-play. An exchange between Dumisile and Phumelele supports this point (Eshowe English teachers' focus group interviews, 25 February 2000). Dumisile suggested that for the improvement of the programme Liberty Learning Channel should "Dramatise poetry and literature, give live to the lesson" (Eshowe English teachers' focus group interviews, 25 February 2000). To which Phumelele added "They can use pictures, role-play, drama, the same things Dumisile was saying" (Eshowe English teachers' focus group interviews, 25 February 2000).

To give examples that rural students can relate to

One suggestion as to the improvement of the programme was provided by Bongiwe. Bongiwe said that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* should give examples that rural students can relate to (Imbali Science teachers' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000). Bongiwe expressed this point succinctly:

I would say in some other topics they must find more things that [...] relate to other children who are not from the urban areas. If we are talking about ammonia, if they can talk about the kraal, [...] in the cattle kraal there is a little bit of hydrogen there when they talk about fertilisers and the smell, it smells like ammonia. If they can find someone who can relate what is done in the classroom to what other people who are living in the rural areas know, that would be far better (Imbali Science teachers' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000).

To shorten the length of the programme

Some interviewees from Imbali, Eshowe and Tongaat regions suggested that the length of the programme should be shortened. Some of the participants amongst the above-mentioned interviewees also indicated that one thing they would change about the programme would be the length, making it shorter. Reasons given for this assertion were the short concentration span of students, and the other chores to be done. Patience said: "I think the time has to be shortened, it's too long for us to concentrate" (Eshowe English students' focus group interviews, 23 February 2000). Similarly, Lungie stated:

What is needed to be improved is the time, it mustn't take more than an hour. I suggest because we have many things to do at home as I am a girl, I live with my grand mother only. So, many things are done by me, so that's [why] I am saying it mustn't take more than one hour (Imbali English students' focus group interviews, 15 April 2000).

Pillay also expressed that one thing he would change about the programme was "the duration of each programme because the children's concentration spans are not that long" (Tongaat Biology teachers' focus group interviews, 8 May 2000).

To repeat the broadcast so that it can cater for those who are in school during the broadcast

A suggestion advanced by Eshowe mathematics teachers' focus group interviewees was that the programme should be repeated so that it could cater for those who are in

school during the broadcast. Zakhele explained this point best when he said: “first of all it’s about time that it catered even for those who are in schools [...] if it can be repeated like the soaps because they are repeated” (Eshowe Mathematics teachers’ focus group interviews, 24 February 2000).

The presenters to slow the pace of teaching

Some interviewees from Eshowe region advocated that Liberty Learning Channel presenters should slow the pace of their teaching for students to be able to grasp what they are teaching. Also, some of the students from this region suggested that one thing they would change about the programme was the pace of teaching by making it slower. Nzakayise remarked: “I think [...] they must also teach at a slow pace so that we can understand” (Eshowe Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 22 February 2000). Also, Penelope responded to the question as follows: “I would suggest the speed to be minimised” (Eshowe Biology students’ focus group interviews, 22 February 2000).

To get young presenters

A mathematics student at Tongaat region proposed that *Liberty Learning Channel* should try and get young presenters in view of the fact that their voices will be more clearer and that old presenters do not appeal to them. For the betterment of the programme Hassim suggested that Liberty Learning Channel should “Try and get young presenters because [...] if they are young the[ir] voice will be more clearer so they [students] will learn. The other teachers like don’t appeal us that much” (Tongaat Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 7 March 2000). The age of the presenters was also said to be one of the aspects of the programme Kevin, also a mathematics student at Tongaat region would change if given the chance (Tongaat Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 7 March 2000).

The content being taught on the programme to coincide with what is being done at school

Some mathematics students at Imbali region recommended that the content being taught on the programme should coincide with what is being taught at school. Vincent explained this point best by saying: “the teachers [presenters] to copy the syllabus [...] [and] teach what the [...] schools are teaching at the time so that when I [...]

didn't get much information, when I come to the TV I will get the information" (Imbali Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 12 April 2000). A science teacher at Tongaat region said that one of the things he would change about the programme was to make what was being taught at the programme to coincide with what was being done in the classrooms. Dipsy said: "I think the learning Channel should correspond on what we are doing in school. If we are on a certain topic, they should teach that" (Tongaat Science teachers' focus group interviews, 8 March 2000).

Other aspects of the programmes some students from less resourced schools mentioned they would change if given the chance were to use local languages in the teaching; and talk about youth problems. These aspects will be discussed further using representative comments from the respondents.

To use local languages in the teaching

A biology student at Eshowe region mentioned that one thing he would change about the programme was the language of instruction by using other languages or local languages. Khuliwe pointed out that Liberty Learning Channel should "use other languages because [...] sometimes it seems to be language which is essential in understanding" (Eshowe Biology students' focus group interviews, 22 February 2000).

To talk about youth problems

Another student from Imbali region related that one thing she would change about the programme would be the content of the programme by also talking about the problems facing the youth. She felt that talking about youth problems was necessary because the youth did not know how to deal with the problems (Imbali Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 12 April 2000). When asked one thing she could change about the programme if given a change, Nokuzola replied: "I think it could be just to talk about may be problems about the youth. The problems that we are facing we don't know what to do" (Imbali Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 12 April 2000).

It is imperative to note that a good education demands good teachers (Perraton, 1993:1) and that among the conditions that define the capability of a school's teaching force are: the teachers' mastery of the material they are supposed to teach (Beeby,

1966; Huberman and Miles, 1984; Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991); the amount of teaching experience they have (Haddad *et al.*, 1990); the length of time they have been in the school (Purkey and Smith, 1983); and the extent to which the group is full time in the school. In this study, participants' views on the kind of presenters who would improve the programme were also interrogated. Results will be presented under the following headings: suggestions commonly held by participants from the different regions under investigations; suggestions by participants from well resourced schools; and suggestions by participants from less resourced schools. These suggestions will be discussed in details drawing representative comments from the participants.

3.2.2.7.4. Suggestions commonly held by participants from the different regions under investigation

Suggestions commonly held by participants from the different regions were that presenters should be: people who are experts in their field; people who are confident and humorous; people who can relate to the students; and people versed with outcome based-education methods. These suggestions will be discussed further drawing representative comments from the focus group interviewees.

People who are experts in their field

From the findings, it was evident that the most prevalent proposition from majority of the teachers and a host of the students was that the presenters should be people who knew the subject content or experts in their field (see Appendix F1 & F2). Lungi explained that "people that are needed as presenters [...] should be experts in their fields" (Imbali English teachers' focus group interviews, 15 April 2000). Also, Lucia said: "I think it must be someone who is well-qualified on that particular [...] subject" (Imbali English students' focus group interviews, 15 April 2000).

People who are confident and humorous

Another suggestion advanced by some participants from the different region was that the kind of presenter who would improve the programme would be people who are confident and humorous. Heather noted that the person: "must be confident, come across well, humorous and again enthusiastic. [...] they must be lively" (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics teachers' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000). Similarly, Ryan said: "Somebody who is confident, humorous and knows what they

are doing” (Northwood High School Science students’ focus group interviews, 31 May 2000).

People who can relate to the students

Several participants from the different regions proposed that the presenters had to be people who can relate to the students. Dorinda illustrated this point clearly when she said:

Qualified experienced teachers, not getting someone with so many degrees. It’s got to be an experienced teacher [...] [who] has actually dealt with children in the recent years. That they [teacher] actually know the questions that they [students] are asking and the problems that they [students] normally have, things that they [students] normally do that they [students] shouldn’t do, they’ve got to be experienced teachers (Northlands Girls’ High School Mathematics teachers’ focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

Also, Thandeka remarked: “Anyone [...] who understands the problems of the students and who is having the knowledge” (Imbali mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 12 April 2000).

People versed with outcome based-education methods

Some participants advised that the presenters who can improve the programme are people who are able to use approaches that could be used to teach outcome-based education (OBE). S’bu said: “I think the presenters with [...] enough knowledge as my colleague has said. Presenters who are going to come with the new methods of teaching, the new OBE” (Imbali Mathematics teachers’ focus group interview, 12 April 2000). Similarly, Kirthanya conveyed: “we are at that time where a different form of education was put into play in schooling. [...] Someone who has the new methods” (Northlands Girls’ High School Mathematics students’ focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

3.2.2.7.5. Suggestions by participants from well resourced schools

Suggestions held by participants from the well resourced schools were that presenters should be: young people; like William Smith; someone who can speak to the youth without degrading them; and celebrities. These suggestions will be discussed further drawing representative comments from the interviewees.

Young people

Some students at Northwood High School suggested that presenters who can improve the programme would be young in age. These students were of the opinion that young presenters would attract students to the programme and students would be able to identify with them. An exchange between Raees and Raymond supports this point best (Northwood High School Science students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000). Raees said: "I will say have young presenter [...] if it is a person I can identify with, I will watch it" (Northwood High School Science students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000). To which Raymond added "I wouldn't mind a younger presenter because they will kind of catch more teenagers attention and make it more appealing" (Northwood High School Science students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000).

Like William Smith

Again, some students from Northwood High School advised that presenters who are like William Smith could improve the programme. These students described William Smith as good, explained well, humorous and made them feel like part of the programme (Northwood High School Science students' focus group interviews, 31 May 2000, see Appendix F2).

Someone who can speak to the youth without degrading them

A student from Northlands Girls' High School suggested those presenters who can improve the programme are people who can speak to the youth without degrading them. Martha stated: "someone who will be able to speak to young people without degrading them in anyway" (Northlands Girls' High School Mathematics students' focus group interviews, 23 May 2000).

Celebrities

People who are celebrities were proposed to be the kind of presenters who can improve the programme by a biology student from Grosvenor Boys' High School. Sbusiso said that celebrities as presenters would improve the programme because students are more familiar with them and would make the programme interesting for students to watch. Sbusiso responded to the question as follows: "if they put celebrities as role models, it makes it more interesting because you're more familiar

with this person plus they're more interesting. So you will want to listen to this person" (Grosvenor Boys' High School Biology students focus group interviews, 6 April 2000).

3.2.2.7.6. Suggestions by participants from less resourced schools

Suggestions held by participants from the less resourced schools were that presenters should be: people from different race groups; people who are able to motivate students and to accommodate their views; and people who are sympathetic, confident, not hot-tempered, not shy on the camera, and interested in teaching South African students. These suggestions will be discussed further drawing representative comments from the respondents.

People from different race groups

A suggestion given by several participants from the less resourced schools was that presenters from the different race groups would improve the programme (see Appendix F1 & F2). Govender answered the question as follows: "I think different racial groups, gender, age groups" (Tongaat English teachers' focus group interviews, 9 March 2000). Also, Eshowe science students' focus group interviewees said:

Phumzile: They should be all races. Because may be the Whites go too fast, and I think English is not our first language and we don't understand it as much better as Whites.

Charlotte: They should be all races.

Biyela: All races (Eshowe Science students' focus group interviews, 23 February 2000).

People who are able to motivate students and to accommodate their views

A biology teacher from Tongaat region proposed that people who are able to motivate students and accommodate their views are the kind of presenter who can improve the programme. Naidoo noted that the kind of presenters who can improve the programme: "must be able to motivate the scholars and accommodate the pupils views as well" (Tongaat Biology teachers' focus group interview, 8 May 2000).

People who are sympathetic, confident, not hot tempered, not shy on the camera, and interested in teaching South African students

Other qualities of presenters who could improve the programme proposed by a few science students at Imbali region were that the presenters needed to be sympathetic and not short tempered, confident and not shy on the phone, and people who are interested in teaching South African students for the betterment of the country (Imbali Science students' focus group interviews, 14 April 2000, see Appendix F2).

3.2.2.7.7. William Smith's response to the possibility of implementing some of the above suggestions

It is noteworthy that William Smith, the mastermind behind the programme was consulted on the possibility of implementing some of the suggestions given by the participants. On the issue of changing the time slot or having a repeat broadcast, Smith related that he had nothing to do with the time slot and that the SABC had total control of the time slot. He further suggested that given the appropriate time slot and time for repeat broadcasts, he would air the programme (William Smith, personal interview, 6 July 2000). Of note is that the SABC in mid 2003 made available an afternoon time slot, available only when there is no live coverage of cricket matches or Parliament discussions. According to William Smith, Liberty Learning Channel utilises this afternoon broadcast for phone-in lessons (telephone interview, 11 March 2004). Therefore, there is no re-broadcast of the morning programmes, and those students and teachers who are in school during the morning broadcast continue to miss out.

On the suggestion of having multi-racial or Black presenters, Smith argued that he could not use them as presenters because in his opinion, they did not speak English "perfectly". He added that the programme is taught using English and the presenters had to have the right accent (William Smith, personal interview, 11 August 1999). With regard to having an audience or learners in the studio, William Smith said: "No, it's disastrous thing. SABC tried and they wasted hundreds of millions of rands. It doesn't work. What's the students gonna do there? For what educational value? [...] what do students tell other students? [...] how can students answer questions of other students?" (William Smith, personal interview, 6 July 2000). From the above quotation, Smith felt that it was a waste of money to have students in the studio because he believed that students had nothing of educational value to say to other students.

On the possibility of having a panel of presenters in the studio, William Smith said that he could not have a panel of presenters because it does not work and it was difficult to get qualified people who can be presenters. On filming in classrooms, Smith argued that it was too expensive and students would be frightened by having cameras in the classroom (William Smith, personal interview, 6 July 2000). With regards to having young presenters, Smith said that this was a good idea, but added that the only problem was if they had no experience. He further added that the young presenters need to bring experience, knowledge, method, level and that those qualities come with experience (William Smith, personal interview, 6 July 2000).

3.2.2.8. Conclusion

In this part of the study, results revealed that the most watched television programmes by the students were comedies, drama, sports, adventure, movies, music and soap operas. The most watched programmes amongst the teachers were news, comedies and soap operas. Educational programmes were not as popular as the above mentioned programmes as only a few teachers from the different regions claimed to watch them. Amongst the students, educational programmes and news were watched by a small number of the participants', with most watched educational programmes being *Take 5* and *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Diverse explanations were given for watching or not watching the above programmes and they differed from individual to individual.

Results also indicated that a great majority of the teacher and students felt that educational television was instrumental in teaching and learning and further results from the majority of teachers showed that educational television was not a threat to the security of their jobs. Reasons for the above assertion varied from person to person.

On the usage pattern of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, findings showed that several teachers and a great majority of the students from the different regions under study utilised the programme. The most used form of the programme was the live broadcast, with a few participants utilising the *Sowetan* supplement. The video-taped materials from Liberty Learning Channel were hardly used by the great majority of

the participants, with only a few students and one teacher using them. The Internet materials were not utilised by any of the participants. Various reasons for not fully using the programme and its various forms of the programme were given.

The results also revealed that a great majority of those who claimed to use the programme did so sparingly and they did their viewing at home and by themselves. A great majority brought to light that they did not know anybody else who watched the programme and a great majority of the few who related that they knew someone else who used the programme confirmed that they did not discuss with them what they view on *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. A host of reasons for not watching the programme often and for not discussing what they watch on the programme was given and varied from participant to participant.

Also, results further denoted that majority of the participants' became aware of the *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* by chance or by switching on television sets and seeing it. Awareness through reading newspapers, television advertisements, pupils and colleagues, William Smith and the Department of Education were mentioned by a few of the teachers. Awareness through friends, brothers or sisters, newspapers, uncles, teachers, cousins, the researcher and television guide were mentioned by a few of the students.

A wide range of factors which influenced the participants' decision to watch or not to watch the programme were given and varied from individual to individual, with the bulk of the participants' putting forward that time slot made them not watch the programme. Several reasons were put forward for this assertion and varied from individual to individual.

On the item weighing up participants' views on the length of the programme, findings showed that the best part of the participants' felt that the programme was too long. A few students related that the programme was too short for activities such as phone-in programmes.

Overall outcomes on the question probing participants' views on the target audience of the programme demonstrated that most of the teachers perceived the programme as

being targeted to all South African matric students and it interested across class and racial divisions. A host of the students asserted that the programme was targeted to all South African students, and a good number of the students did not think so. A number of reasons were articulated for the assertions that the programme appealed or did not appeal to all South Africans.

On the query investigating what participants liked and disliked most about the programme, the results showed that a great majority of the participants liked the programme for a number of reasons, which varied from individual to individual. The most disliked aspect by most of the participants' was the time slot of the broadcast.

The study also brought to light that a great majority of the teachers and several of the students held that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was relevant to local realities in terms of teaching approaches used, and examples given in the programme. Several participants from all the regions under study agreed with the use of English as the language of instruction on *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, while a good number of students felt that some use of simplified English and local languages was needed in order for second English language speakers to understand. Also, several students from rural and township schools and the majority of the students from multi-racial school revealed that the presenters were indicative of the multi-racial South African Society, with a number of students claiming that the presenters are not representative. The great majority of the teachers said that the presenters were not representative of the multi-racial South African society and a host of reasons were given for this claim, amongst them the fact that all presenters were White.

Results also revealed that the great majority of the teachers believed that the programme was furthering economic growth, reconstruction and development; not promoting national identity but in some ways promoted regional identity; was not rectifying the educational disparities of the past; and could be utilised to impart information about outcome-based education. Several rationales were given to support the above arguments and they varied from individual to individual.

Further results on propositions to improve the programme showed that majority of the participants' felt that time slot of the programme should be changed. A great majority

of the teachers and a host of the students also proposed that the presenters should be people who know the subject matter or are specialists in their fields.

Overall, the participants related that *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was a great concept and if suggestions they made were effected in its production, distribution and consumption, it would be of great help for teachers and students. However, on consulting William Smith on the possibility of implementing some of the suggestions put forward by the participants, a limited willingness to consider the audiences' suggestions was shown (see 3.2.2.7.7.). The next section of the study will give a general conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER 4

General conclusion and recommendations

4.1. Introduction

The objective of this study was to investigate the role of television broadcast-based distance education in South Africa as a possibility for extending the provision of formal education to large numbers of learners and how the SABC and the department of education fulfils the promise of extending education. Thereafter, the project attempted to map out the complex issues involved in the production, distribution and the consumption of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

The first objective of the study was achieved by first giving a critique of the conventional system of education and why distance education is an alternative option for provision of education. Further, why distance education, and particularly television broadcast distance education, is crucial in the provision of education in developing countries in the face of globalisation of mass communication and new information technologies. A general picture of education in Africa and the educational situation in South Africa, highlighting the distance education scenario in South Africa was traced. The role of mass media in distance education and television broadcast-based distance education effectiveness in teaching and learning, the possibility of television broadcast-based distance education in South Africa, and the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC's) educational broadcasting services with more emphasis on educational television were investigated.

In order to map out the complex issues involved in the production, distribution and the consumption of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* the study investigated whether the producers and partners of the programme created a text which connects with the multi-cultural reality of teachers, learners and other viewers in South Africa; the role of the programme in the service of growth, reconstruction and development; why the programme is not popular among the youth, and what can be done to make it effective in enhancing teaching and learning; and the intertextuality, production and distribution of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

4.2. Methodology used in this study

Most of the information on the possibility of using television broadcast-based distance education in South Africa for extending the provision of formal classroom-based distance education to large numbers of learners, and on how the SABC and the department of education fulfils the promise of extending education, was gathered through scanning of literature related to the subject under study. Also, how the SABC and the department of education fulfils the promise of extending education and the complex issues involved in the production, distribution and the consumption of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, was studied by use of ethnographic research procedures, which are basically qualitative in nature. These included focus group interviews, in-depth interviews and participant observation (see chapter one part two section 1.2. for more details on materials and methods).

4.3. The role of television broadcast-based distance education in South Africa as a possibility for extending the provision of formal education and how the SABC and the Department of Education fulfils the promise of extending education.

4.3.1. The failure of conventional systems of education to meet the demands of education and current educational practices and their impacts on education

The study has established that conventional systems of education (see chapter two part one section 2.2.) and current educational practices (see chapter two part one section 2.6.1.) have fallen short of preparing citizens with a strong foundation of general education; with the desire and ability to continue to learn, to apply, and to develop new knowledge, skills, and technologies; to move flexibly between occupations; to accept responsibility for personal performance; to send and achieve appropriate standards, and work co-operatively (Andrew, 1990: 29; Amory, 1997; Hawkins¹). Distance education is offered here not only as an alternative to conventional education delivery at secondary and higher levels of education, but also as a low cost alternative to expanding education (Dodds, *et al.*, 1972: 10; Young *et al.*, 1980: 31) (see chapter two part one section 2.2. through section 2.3.).

¹ The World Bank Institute <http://www.worldbank.org/> date accessed 10/2/2004.

Also, constructivism (Bartlett, 1932; Dewey, 1938; Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978), a theory of cognitive growth and learning, is offered as an alternative set of values that may significantly influence learning and that can help develop the kind of citizens (see chapter two part one section 2.6.3) who can be able to function successfully in real-world contexts (Anderson and Roth, 1989; Roth, 1989) and to function in a complex, information age society. In addition, some aspects of constructivism applied or worth applying in the development of distance education materials were highlighted and suggested (see chapter two part one section 2.6.5).

4.3.2. Distance education (particularly television broadcast-based) in the face of globalisation of mass communications and new information technologies

The study also highlighted that due to lack of access to new technologies in the case of developing countries and the chance of increasing the gap between the rich and poor countries in the face of globalisation of mass communications and new information technologies, public service broadcasting was not only relevant, but arguably more relevant than ever (Teer-Tomaselli and Tomaselli, 1996: 220; Dahlgren, 2000: 5; Murdock, 2000: 54; Williams, 2000). Without the public service broadcasting commitment to universality, developing countries would be left with deep and enduring inequalities of access to information, knowledge, education and representation. Therefore, for those countries wishing to educate very large numbers of relatively poor people, mass media are still more appropriate technologies than the new information technologies (see chapter two part one section 2.7). Therefore, this study suggests that television broadcast-based distance education remains important especially in the developing countries in light of the need to increase access to education, redress the disparities caused by globalisation of mass communication and by lack of information and communication technologies.

Further, it has been shown that the lack of basic infrastructure, such as electricity, video cassettes, television, telephone lines, a reliable postal system and even postal addresses in developing countries and in majority of schools in South Africa may often render the use of technologies impossible (van der Merwe, Windell and Mitchell, 1988: 50; Sedibe, 1998: 95-96; SAIDE, 1999; Department of Education and Department of Communications, 2000; Jensen, 2002). However, in South Africa and elsewhere, schools without infrastructure for viewing educational television can

benefit from the use of telecentres or community centres, as telecentres have been hailed as the solution to development problems around the world because of their ability to provide desperately needed access to information and communication technologies (Gomez and Hunter, 1999) (see chapter two part one section 2.7). It should be noted that community viewing centres have proved to be very successful ventures in a country like Sudan, for example (Nwosu, 1990: 50).

4.3.3. Television broadcast-based distance education effectiveness in teaching and learning

With regard to the effectiveness of television broadcast-based distance education in teaching and learning, the study established that there was no doubt that television was an effective means of achieving traditional educational goals (Nwosu, 1990: 44; Dorr, 1992: 1398) (see chapter two part two section 2.2.2.). Similarly, results from focus group interviews conducted in this study clearly showed that a great majority of the teachers and students felt that educational television was useful in teaching and learning (see chapter three part two section 3.2.2.2.).

Despite the proven effectiveness of television broadcast-based distance education in teaching and learning, several factors why television broadcast-distance education is not used to its full potential in the classroom were identified. These included, *inter alia*, the large initial investment required for development and distribution of the programmes (Anzalone, 1987: 39; Mayo, 1990; Klees, 1995: 399-4000; Council of Minister of Education Canada, 1997; Butcher, 1998); the short supply of the technical staff (Ural, 1991: 42; Butcher, 1998; Jensen, 2002); lack of political support on educational broadcasting (Bates, 1986; Hawkins²; Daly³); rigidly imposed broadcast schedules (Dieuzede, 1962; Bates, 1984; Souchon, 1984; Mayo, 1989); linearity of the medium; lack of interaction of television (Bacsich, 1996); and teachers difficulties in previewing videos, obtaining equipment, incorporating programmes into the curriculum and linking television programming to assessment activities (Revees, 1998) (see chapter 2 part II section 2.2.2).

² The World Bank Institute <http://www.worldbank.org/> date accessed 10/2/2004.

³ <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/library/daly/dalypaper1.html> date accessed 10/2/2004.

The researcher supports Bates (1984) argument that he does not regard any of the above inhibitors as being convincing, as solutions to these problems are available (as shown in chapter two part two section 2.2.2) or can be sought if the commitment to use television broadcast-based distance education is there.

4.3.4. Education in Africa

The present investigation showed a grim picture of conventional education in Africa especially in terms of the lack of resources and inadequate teaching staff in numbers and qualification (UNESCO, 1997: 206) and how distance education strategies should be seen as an attractive alternative or complimentary delivery systems to help address such issues. In addition, the study outlined current positive initiatives and developments in distance education at the tertiary level (Perraton, 2000) and various initiatives at the post-primary level (Kala, 1995) (see chapter two part one section 2.4). The study revealed that institutions offering distance education programmes at post-primary level are beset by problems of inadequate and insufficient resources (material, financial and human), lack of expertise and appropriate training, as well as negative attitudes towards distance learning strategies on the part of policy and decision-making (not the case for South Africa, see chapter two part one section 2.5.1) (Kala, 1995).

4.3.5. Educational situation in South African (both conventional and distance education)

Since South Africa had a different education scenario from the rest of Africa and on the basis of the fact that South Africa is the focus of this study, the educational situation in South Africa was approached separately and in detail. In this regard, the study took cognisance of the fact that the South African education system was previously designed in accordance with apartheid policies. The National Party government legitimised race as the defining category that determined place of residence, occupation and certainly the nature of education (Prinsloo, 1999). Educational authorities were classified as White, Indian, Coloured and Black. The differential funding to White, Indian, Coloured and Black education reflected the official social hierarchy where Whites received the highest per capita rate of funding, and where Indians and Coloureds were offered a degree of elevation beyond the status offered to Africans (Ural, 1991; Gerwel, 1994: 82; Prinsloo, 1999; Steyn, 1999: 66).

Bantu education, for example, was modelled in such a manner as to deprive the majority of any meaningful role in the public life of South African society.

In this type of education, students, teachers and parents were excluded from the management of the system. Therefore, fragmentation, exclusion and the absence of democracy had a detrimental effect on the development of human resources and in short, a devastating effect on the society (UNESCO, 1997: 187).

The South African school system was race-based until the present government came into power. In the White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995) and in the preamble to the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) the government committed itself to eliminating the inequalities in provision of education as soon as possible. The underlying approach of the Reconstruction and Development Programmes (RDP) is that education and training should be available to all from the cradle to the grave. RDP makes education a right, insisting more on the possibilities of access than on the reasons for exclusion (ANC, 1994). It allows a great number to have access to education. At the formal level, the Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996) confirms equality of access (irrespective of race, gender, language, religion or culture), entrenches the right of every learner to “quality education” and establishes procedures for the democratic governance of schools.

With all the above policies and laws in place, this study noted that many schools and educational institutions which were meant for the deprived majority are still ill-equipped, and in many instances run by inadequately trained staff (Gerwel, 1994: 82; Department of Education, 2000). Pam Christie (quoted in Enslin and Pendlebury, 1998) showed that many historically black schools remain dysfunctional, despite changes in policy and laws. Timetables are confused, days go by with no formal classes, absentee rates are high, problems from the local communities spill over into schools, and violence is rife. Much the same might be said about dysfunctional colleges of education, as Shirley Pendlebury mentions in her brief account of apartheid’s legacy in teacher education (Enslin and Pendlebury, 1998).

Transmission education has also dominated the formal education arena (Prinsloo, 1999) and in common with many other countries, South Africa experiences a shortage

of science and mathematics teachers (UNESCO, 1997: 206; Department of Education and Department of Communications, 2001). In contrast to other countries, a great deal of the crisis facing science and mathematics education (SME) in South Africa is unique, arising through deliberate government policy traceable back to the days of “grand apartheid” (Andrew, 1990: 25; Kahn, Volmink and Kibi, 1995). Census figures indicate that the illiteracy rate is 15 percent and 14 percent for adult females and males⁴ respectively (Population Reference Bureau Data Finder, 2000; UNFPA State of World Population, 2003). With regard to educational disadvantage, it is imperative to mention that the African population predominates.

In further education and training, only a minority of those who complete the compulsory phase of school go for further education and training (ANC Educational Department, 1994). Therefore, there is an urgent need for further education and training to take place in a variety of contexts to enhance the development of the individual and to ensure economic progress. It is also essential for members of the workforce to keep pace with scientific and technological change throughout the duration of their working lives.

In the Science, Engineering and Technology sector (this sector includes the sciences, mathematics, computing, technology, and engineering), the ANC’s policy framework concludes that:

In general, science, mathematics and technology education, both formal and non-formal, has failed to address our levels of scientific literacy and technological fluency. Among the newly-industrialising countries, we are ranked bottom in terms of development of our human resources (ANC Education Department, 1994).

Officially, outcome-based education is regarded as a key to improving quality at all levels of education and training. Key to this transformation is the replacement of the existing curricula with new ones which reflect the priorities and needs of the South African society, both in dealing with the effects of apartheid and in preparation for the future in a highly competitive, and rapidly changing global environment. Several

⁴ Illiteracy rate for adult females and males means rates for women and men above 15 years of age who cannot, with understanding, both read and write a short statement on everyday life. Data is derived from estimates for the 1998-2001 period (Population Reference Bureau Data Finder, 2000; UNFPA State of World Population, 2003).

policy instruments turn on this notion, including the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), curriculum 2005/now 2021 and the norms and standards for teacher education. Important though they are, formal changes cannot guarantee better practice, and where policy makers take little account of the context and agents of implementation, policy may impede rather than enable transformation (Enslin and Pendlebury, 1998).

The White Paper on Education and Training that has been referred to stressed the necessity for the following corner-stones of national educational provision. That is life-long learning and training; a wide range of accessible levels of educational facilities; recognition of prior learning (RPL); consultation with all educational stakeholders: learners, community groups, industry, and institutions; and utilisation of distance education and training strategies (van Zyl, 1996: 93). The White Paper also identified distance education as an essential mechanism for achieving its goals, not only as a national educational strategy, but also as a method to be adopted by a wide variety of educational and training organisations. It sees five areas of application which are: massive initial and in-service training of teachers; a key role in Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) with network of community learning centres; in Further Education providing a purposeful education delivery to learners at post-compulsory level irrespective of age, place and time of delivery; the generation of a wide range of local study guides, video, computer packages etc. applicable and appropriate to local needs; and providing a “fresh start” to learners hostile to the methods associated with apartheid, and creating “a new approach”, an innovative climate to address the educational crisis (Van Zyl, 1996: 93).

With regard to distance education in South Africa, the present study showed that it is quite clear that there is both significant policy commitment to the use of distance education methods in solving many of the country’s education problems and there is also an urgent need to improve the quality of that provision (Butcher, 1998; South African Distance Education Policy Document, 1996) (see chapter two part one section 2.5.1). Also, current distance educational initiatives in South Africa were highlighted (see chapter two part one section 2.5.2.).

4.3.6. The role of mass media (broadcast-based distance education) in South Africa

With regard to use of broadcast-based distance education, the study revealed that the commitment to utilise broadcast based-distance education in South Africa is evident. For example, the national education committee declared 1991 the year of mass education. Similarly, the ANC has been committed to qualitative mass education based on technology. This was highlighted in a report by the International Development Corporation (ICD) investigating the feasibility of satellite services for South Africa which addressed the financial, commercial and technical implications of providing television broadcasting (Ural, 1991). Also, the Human Science Research Council had two relevant research programmes that provided an overview of the field; distance teaching in education and training in the Republic of South Africa, in 1987; and the uses of Radio and television in education and training, in 1984 (Ural, 1991).

In this regard, the study found that educational broadcasting in South Africa is not intended to replace educators, but it can be used effectively by learners and educators across all sectors to augment the provision of education and training. The broad needs for educational broadcasting with regard to distance education in particular, identified in the document *Educational Broadcasting Plan* in March 1996 included: upgrading teaching skills and knowledge of different subjects; equipping teachers to understand and teach new areas of curriculum and providing them with some learning resources to use in the classroom; and a basic introductory course to education and to theories of teaching and learning (Department of Education, 1996).

Therefore, in an effort to map out the SABC's role in the provision of education, the study established that the current material and technological frameworks of broadcasting in South Africa was as the result of apartheid policies of differential investment in infrastructure and services for different groups (Barnett, 1999). In broadcasting as in other sectors, disproportionate amounts of money were invested in the radio and television services aimed at white audiences. Official language policy under apartheid codified and institutionalised nine African languages, each of which was conceived of as corresponding to a separate and distinct "ethnic" population. Accordingly radio services were organised along the lines of separate language

broadcasts for separate audiences in discrete territorial units. The extension of television services followed the same pattern. Television programming sharply differentiated between channels on the basis of “race”, with one channel explicitly directed at white Afrikaans, and English-speaking audiences, while another was targeted at non-white audiences (Barnett, 1999). Historically, broadcasting in South Africa has not been organised either culturally or technologically to provide a common space of communication, but has instead worked to reproduce notions of separate and distinct populations with their own separate cultures (Tomaselli *et al.*, 1989).

Although the IBA Act of 1993 started the process of reforming the system, this study found that service provision and other elements of the system still continue, in the main, along the structured lines of the past. There is inequality in access; inequality in resource allocation (frequencies, human resources and finance); inequality in language, cultural and educational programming; lack of diversity and choice, in services and in programmes; and lack of empowerment for the historically disadvantaged. Many services which were catering to particular segments of the population continue to do so. Access to broadcasting, whether by service providers or by end users, has not improved sufficiently (Department of Communications, 1997).

Regarding educational broadcasting, before 1994, the study revealed that although there was an outcry from all sectors of South African society, both television and radio responded to the needs of the social order of the time to the detriment of the kind of discourse that was required to turn things around in South Africa (Tomaselli *et al.*, 1989; Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Broadcasting, 1997; Barnett, 1999). Audience needs were not considered and educational material was inappropriate. This mirrored the fact that the department of education at that time was an extension of the prevailing social system and the SABC had to uphold that system with the result that both were not in a position to provide a meaningful educational broadcasting service (Kwape, 2000; SABC Education, 2004).

In post-1995, this study identified that the outcry at the time eventually culminated in the establishment of a broadcast support to help achieve the goals of outcomes-based education, strive for life-long learning development and provide facilities for distance

education in South Africa. The result is the partnership of the public broadcaster, the SABC, with the Department of Education (Kwape, 2000). It is under this partnership that a new television and radio service was launched in 1997. This service has increased its programming output from approximately 10 hours per week to 20 hours per week, across SABC's three channels. Educational television programming (which is the focus of this study) averages about 90 000 minutes a year (SABC, 2003) and SABC radio broadcasts more than 150 000 minutes of educational programmes a year in eleven languages across the corporation's radio service (SABC, 2003).

So far, the educational television and radio service has developed a library of educational programmes to support: early childhood development; curriculum support; youth development; adult education and training; and human resource development programmes, (specifically for teachers, farmers and managers (Galombik and Lekorotsoana, 1996; Kwape, 2000; SABC Education, 2004) (see chapter two part two section 2.2.4). The use of the materials in schools is taking place. This is made possible by the launch of an initiative called School Access Project by the SABC and Department of Education (Pretorius, 2000). This project attempts to ensure that selected schools acquire the receiving equipment and outreach in order to enable use of the educational programmes. However, one cannot state that all schools use the media in their teaching discourse, as most schools in South Africa lack the essential resources (Galombik and Lekorotsoana, 1996; SABC Education, 2004). For example, statistics show that in 2002, only 43 per cent of schools in South Africa had television sets (Sowaga, 2002). However, one can state that awareness levels have been raised, both by the broadcaster and the department of education such that it prompts schools to start using television in their teaching (Kwape, 2000). Also, the study found that part of the strategy to increasing access of the receiving equipment in schools is facilitated by private sector companies (Kwape, 2000; Department of Education and Department of communications, 2001; SABC Education, 2004) (see chapter two part two section 2.2.4.1.).

It is worth noting that in an interview Nicola Golambik, the then manager of educational television, stated that the SABC in partnership with the Department of Education was very successful in non-formal education programming. This is unlike in the formal educational programming which she said was hard and difficult to

achieve and that the corporation was still trying to come up with such programming (Nicola Golambik, personal interview, 11 August 1999). It was clear that in the area of formal education in support of the curriculum, the SABC does not provide syllabus based programmes for use in schools but provides structural support to the formal system of education by providing resources that can be used in the classroom. The study found that the only syllabus-related programming provided by the SABC in collaboration with Liberty Learning Channel is the provision of a matric support programme popularly known as *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* (it is this programme which is the focus of this study). The programme offers remedial support for matric (grade twelve students) and grade eleven pupils (SABC, 2003). It should be noted that the SABC contribution to this programme is just the provision of the airwaves (see chapter two part two section 2.2.4.4.6.).

Equally significant, the study showed that as far as adult basic education and training was concerned, the SABC's first campaign failed due to inadequate funding from the government and that the SABC for the previous two years (1997-98) concentrated on programming for adults on life skills but not literacy *per se* (Golambik, personal interview, 11 August 1999). Despite all the SABC's educational television initiatives mentioned in this study (see chapter 2 part II, section 2.2.4.4.6.), Golambik, quoted in Mpofu *et al.* (1996: 282) said that the corporation had very limited specialised expertise in educational broadcasting. Perhaps the above factor together with media audiences being highly fragmented, both in terms of unequal access to material resources, and in terms of different cultural tastes, interests and competencies which distinguish social groups (Barnett, 1999) could be said to be a challenge in South Africa in her pursuit to establishing a large scale television broadcast-based distance education.

4.4. The complex issues involved in the production, distribution and the consumption of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

The active reading of television by viewers takes within a frame of reference of their "own special filtering equipment, which in general terms may be seen as a mesh of past experiences, present relationships and affiliations and future expectations" (Halloran, 1979: 6). It is argued that to be able to fully understand a discourse it is necessary to look at the social, political and historical conditions of its production and

consumption. These determinants shape what is said, the way it develops, its status, the people who use it, the uses to which it is put, etc. Therefore, in this study, an attempt to understand the production, distribution and consumption of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was crucial.

4.4.1 Production of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

This study revealed that the first broadcast of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* started with taped programmes in October and November 1990, and was then called *Exam Aid' 90*, as shown by Clarke (1991). The first live broadcast was aired in 1993 (William Smith, personal interview, 11 August 1999). The production of the tapes and airing of the live broadcast is done at a studio based at Sable Centre, 41 DeKorte Street, Braamfotein, Johannesburg, and the live broadcast is linked to SABC for distribution through optic fibre, while the tape recorded programmes⁵ are delivered to SABC by a worker from Liberty Learning Channel. Also, the study found that Liberty Learning Channel had merged with the Learning Channel Campus, the Liberty Life Educational Trust, the Krok Brothers and in 2002, Johnnic Learning Channel bought the whole company, by securing 60 per cent of the shareholding (see chapter two part two section 2.2.5.3.). In this merger, Liberty Learning Channel was vested with the onus of producing tapes, the *Sowetan* supplement and airing the live broadcast under the leadership of William Smith, who is also the Science presenter. In the running of the organisation, Smith is assisted by two administrators and a crew of three presenters.

Therefore, Liberty Learning Channel produces *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, a broadcast of SABC 3, from Monday to Friday 09.00am to 10.30am⁶ and on Saturday from 9.00am to 11.30am and 12.00pm to 13.00pm as live broadcasts. The programme broadcasts curriculum subjects for grade 10 to 12 and are scheduled as follows: Monday, English; Tuesday, Mathematics; Wednesday, Biology; Thursday; Science; and Friday, Science. According to William Smith, (personal interview, 11 August 1999) the target audience of the programme are matric students, as was also

⁵ Tape recorded broadcasts ceased to exist in May 2003, and was replaced by a live phone-in programme for grade 10-12 students (William Smith, telephone interview, 11 March 2004).

⁶ From mid 2003, an afternoon time slot from 14.30 pm to 16: 30 pm is given to the Learning Channel at adhoc basis by the SABC specifically when there is no coverage of cricket matches or live Parliament discussions (William Smith, telephone interview, 11 March 2004).

revealed by most of the teachers and students during the focus group interviews (see chapter three part two section 3.2.2.4.3).

William Smith further related that apart from matric students, the programmes are also watched by other people and especially teachers, as was confirmed by Roshni and Bovey, both science teachers at Northwood High School. Roshini said that her house helper watched the programme and Bovey related that some people in his church watched the programme (see chapter three part two section 3.2.2.3). This result supports the conclusions by Dean (1988:49) that the very nature of broadcast television results in an unintended yet interested casual audience of adults beyond whatever specific special interest group has been identified for a particular broadcast. In fact the British Open University has always valued casual viewers and listeners to its transmissions as a means of raising public awareness of the university and as a way of recruiting new students (Kirkwood, 1990). It was also found that up to mid 2003, Liberty Learning Channel provided programming for primary school pupils through the three-hour Saturday tape-recorded broadcast.

The study further pointed out that the programme was curriculum or syllabus-based, contrary to what was envisaged in the inception of the programme. During the inception, it was felt that the programme should be subject-based so that it could be useful to pupils in all of the existing departments and syllabi (Finance Week, 19-25 April, 1990; Seale, 1990). Other plans which were envisaged during the inception of the programme which did not materialise are: the programme being broadcast in English with simulcasting techniques in Afrikaans and some African language (Finance Week, 19-25 April 1990); filming the programme in classrooms; teachers being provided with a weekly menu or guide, advising of the contents of the programmes and how they could best supplement the broadcast (Makobane, 1990); the representation of the SABC, the department of education, newspaper groups and private industries (Seale, 1990) in the Liberty Learning Channel board (see chapter two part two section 2.2.5.2 for reasons why these plans did not materialise).

With regard to the above envisaged partnership, William Smith (personal interview, 11 August 1999) related that Liberty Learning Channel was in partnership only with the Liberty Life Foundation and the SABC. Regarding the rest of the parties, he said that he did not need them. However, it is argued in this study that in educational

broadcasting, collaboration with governmental, nonformal education, university and community organisations is of utmost importance, as was also articulated by Ural (1991). Within the basic structure, there would be pooling of information, experience, and staff for joint audience analysis, dissemination and evaluation as well as production of programme and non-broadcast materials. There is also the economic advantage in that when institutions pool resources together there is bound to be economies of scale i.e. financial savings (Kithome and Gatimu, 2001: 12-13).

Collaborations are necessary because broadcasters cannot conceptualise, design and deliver educational programming on their own because this would result in a situation in which educational programming is broadcast-led. Examples elsewhere in the world have shown that is doomed to failure (A framework for educational programming in South Africa: final report of the task team for the transformation of educational broadcasting⁷). Therefore, successful educational broadcasting needs to marry education and the strengths of broadcasting, based on learners' needs and on broadcasting interest. This partnerships can be important in extending the life of the broadcast package and can help achieve maximum audience penetration. It also ensures that programming is more targeted and better focused and can thereby maximise the effectiveness of educational programming (A framework for educational programming in South Africa: final report of the task team for the transformation of educational broadcasting⁸). However, the department of education is not involved in the production of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. William Smith (personal interview, 6 July 2000) argued that the educational needs of the learners and educators are provided by the presenters whom he said are teachers, examiners and textbook writers and knew the needs and problems of learners.

While partnerships offer many attractive benefits, it is understood in the present study that partnerships are not without a price. For instance, there may be basic antagonism between fields, slow decision making processes etc. (see Freeman, 1981:146; Paul,

⁷ A framework for educational programming in South Africa: final report of the task team for the transformation of educational broadcasting.
<http://www.icasa.org.za/Default.aspx?page=12658&moduledata=571> date accessed 22/4/2004.

⁸ A framework for educational programming in South Africa: final report of the task team for the transformation of educational broadcasting.
<http://www.icasa.org.za/Default.aspx?page=12658&moduledata=571> date accessed 22/4/2004.

1990; Bourdieu, 1993; Field and Spence, 2000; Bouman, 2002:233). It could be argued that such prices which come with partnerships may be the reason why William Smith did not form a partnership with all the parties stipulated in the inception of the programme. This study further suggests that a true partnership requires a great deal of effort and willingness to compromise on the part of each partners, as also suggested by Chute and Gulliner⁹ and Bouman (2002: 229), that collaborative ventures have a greater likelihood of success if: a clear benefit is established for and understood by each member party; the objectives of the partnership are clearly spelled out, and specific schedules and measures of achievement are set out and agreed to by all partners; clear objectives and schedules notwithstanding, both (all) parties recognised that these may have to be reconsidered and renegotiated on a number of occasions as they understand each other's cultures and objectives better, and as the environment changes; and flexibility is essential, but it must be within the context of the original, overall goals of the venture (Paul, 1990). According to Yates (1994 quoted in Kithome and Gatimu, 2001), successful collaborations always involve a lot of communication, negotiation, mutual trust and compromise.

It should be noted that although the provision of teachers with a weekly menu or guide, advising of the contents of the programmes and how they could best supplement the broadcast as envisaged in the start of the programme (Makobane, 1990) did not materialise. A few mathematics teachers from Northlands Girls' High School, Gelofte High School and science teachers from Eshowe suggested that the above information had to be provided to enable the use of the programme. Also, filming of the programme at school was also suggested by some teachers from the Tongaat region (see chapter three part two section 3.2.2.7).

Further, the study revealed that in the production of the programme, there were no producers, scriptwriters, directors etc. Each presenter prepared his or her own lesson. William Smith (personal interview, 11 August 1999) related that the services of the above people were not required, as the presenters were teachers themselves and nobody prepares materials for teachers in the classroom. In addition, he said that one of the reasons why the cost of educational television was high and why it has failed

⁹ <http://www.lucent.com/cedl/distpart.htm> date accessed 23/4/2002.

was due to use of producers. It can be argued that Liberty Learning Channel applies the concept of academic freedom and professional autonomy which assumes that what goes on in a particular educational institution, course or classroom is the responsibility of the professional concerned. This rests on a view of the individual "as professionally competent over the full range of activities he/she undertakes, and this competence includes the necessary knowledge and skills to make or seek insightful and valid appraisal of his work and to act on those appraisals" (Adelman and Alexander, 1982: 15-16).

All the presenters were unanimous in pointing out that the programme was relevant to the needs of the target audience as the programme was developed with the needs of the audience in mind. This was because all the presenters were teachers, wrote books, marked exams, knew the subject matter and the students' needs and problems. In terms of the methods utilised in the programme, the majority of the teachers forming the focus group interviews said that they were similar to the methods employed at school. The students gave varied responses (some saying they were similar, others relating that the methods were not). With regard to the examples given in the programme, the majority of the participants (both teachers and students) felt that the examples given at the programmes were relevant to their everyday life. At the same time, there was a prevalent feeling amongst the participants was that the presenters of the programme were not representative of the multi-racial South African Society and majority of the teachers felt that there was need to use both English and local languages in teaching in the programme in order to help in students understanding (language of instruction in the programme is English only) (see chapter two part two section 3.2.2.5).

With regard to presenters being unrepresentative of the multi-racial South African society, William Smith related that he cannot use black or other race presenters because the programme was taught using English and the presenters had to have the right English accent and these other race groups did not speak perfect English (William Smith, personal interview, 11 August 1999). It is suggested in this study that for William Smith to refuse to use other race groups other than Whites as presenters is to view the world exclusively from his own viewpoint, which serves as a reference against which all others should be scaled or related. This results in an unwarranted

belief that one's own way of doing things is "best" and that one's own group is markedly superior to another (Zhang, 2001). Generally speaking, this type of person is one who neither understands nor accepts the culturally different learner's values, their motives, the rewards that are meaningful to them, their locus of control, their linguistic systems, their learning styles, and their cognitive styles. This is the person who, upon entering or creating a learning environment, does so with cultural orientations and expectations that reflect his/her own cultural values and expectations held by minority learners (Hesler, 1987 quoted in Zhang, 2001; Beckun and Zimney, 1991 quoted in Zhang, 2001). Such a person is "cultural bound" (Cushner, McClelland and Safford, 1992), and is unwilling or unable to look beyond his /her own view of the world.

Regarding relevance of materials or instruction to the target audience, demographic trends in today's schools indicate that the population is ethnically, culturally and racially diverse. Designers and teachers are challenged to provide meaningful, relevant, and motivating educational interventions to all learners. Instruction must be responsive to the needs of these new learners, who often have different backgrounds. This pluralistic focus, which requires accommodation of diversity in the education process, must start with one's own cultural sensitivity. As Andersen and Powell (1991) pointed out: "being culturally sensitive means being able to view the world from the standpoint of a culture other than one's own". For educators, teachers and designers, this means accepting as valid the culturally different values, their motives, rewards that are meaningful to them, their locus of control, their linguistic systems, their learning styles, and their cognitive styles. Incorporating these issues into programme design, prizing this diversity and seeing it as a true asset to meaningful and effective instruction are key components for relevant instructional design (Zhang, 2001).

In pursuit of relevance, Ural (1991) proposed that appropriate locales should be used in programmes so that people will identify with them. Distinguished people from communities should be invited to act in or host programmes and imaginary characters free of cultural bias also could be developed to provide continuity and identification for viewers.

It should be noted that all the above suggestions are made bearing in mind the problems instructional designers would face in terms of relevance to learner's needs. The three main problem areas seem to be: achieving a balance between economies of scale and meeting local needs (Kaye, 1979); difficulties in the generation and dissemination of knowledge within developing countries; and the constantly changing nature of what is relevant (Zahlan, 1988: 79).

Additionally, this study discovered that although *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was promoted on television, newspapers, Internet and magazines, the majority of the teachers and students forming the focus group interviews did not become aware of the programme through the Liberty Learning Channel advertising campaign but saw the programme by chance as they watched television. Research International found that awareness of the matric support campaign through advertising was low, particularly for *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. Only 19 per cent of the students gained awareness of the programme through the advertising campaign. With regard to the *Sowetan* supplement 18 per cent of the students were aware of the supplement through the advertising campaign. Some teachers from the Imbali and Eshowe Region and some English students from the Eshowe related that they were not exposed to the programme, with several teachers from Imbali and Northlands Girls' High School and several students from the multi-racial schools and Eshowe English students revealing that they were not aware of the times of the broadcast. The above results imply that the advertising campaign of Liberty Learning Channel is not very successful.

It is noteworthy that educational programmes, and especially those broadcast during fixed time slots, need to be actively accessed by their intended audiences. In order for this to be effective however, a concerted strategy will be required to market the new service to educators and learners, to inform people of the availability of the service, encourage them to use it and provide them with detailed and user friendly information about the programmes and when they will be available. Such information and encouragement will need to be achieved through a combination of printed materials, electronic media based marketing and support from education sector stakeholders (e.g. teacher and labour unions, students organisations, teacher training colleges, civic associations etc.) (Department of Education, 1996).

This study also suggests that traditional society has a number of viable channels of communication which have been recognised as “conductive systems for mobilising and directing developmental efforts of the grassroots” (Nkala, 1990: 63). Therefore, Liberty Learning Channel must attune their advertising strategies to these channels for mutual enrichment and success. These “informal transference’s” media include family visits, marriage and circumcision feasts, town and village festivals, harvests markets and all potent channels of communication with the rural masses. Other such channels are the town criers, talking drums, village squares, schools, churches and mosques, which are all avenues for information dissemination in rural communities. Specific to South Africa’s rural areas, a tribal chief’s word is not only the law of the land, but a news medium unto itself, too. Because distances are vast and poverty acute in many of South Africa’s isolated regions, villagers often rely entirely on their chiefs for news and guidance (Smith, 1995). Therefore, all the above channels must be used alongside the modern mass media in view of the recognition of the fact that, according to Lucian Pye in his *Communication and political development*:

The press and radio can have profound influence in changing the ways of people only if they are fully supported by the informal, social channels of communication which are intimately related to basic social process...(quoted in Nwosu, 1990: 50).

Additionally, this study established that Liberty Learning Channel relies on audience feedback from audience rating and occasional feedback from comments down the street or letters from viewers thanking the presenters (see chapter two part two section 2.2.5.5). As Bastiansen (1991) mentions in regard to some of the kinds of feedback from audiences broadcasting institutions rely on. It is argued in this study that this kind of monitoring is not sufficient as rating, although so important to television organisations in their quest to measure and control audiences and attract advertising revenue, only tell advertisers how many viewers were exposed to a specific programme content on a particular television channel in a certain time slot, as also put forward by Webster and Wagschlag (1985). In this regard, Todd Gitlin rightly remarked in relation to the electronic setmeter; “the numbers only sample sets tuned in, not necessarily shows watched, let alone grasped, remembered, loved, learned from, deeply anticipated, or mildly tolerated (1983: 54; see also, Morley, 1990: 6-7; Eco, 1993: 99; Hagen, 1999: 142; Hôijer, 1999: 180).

With regard to feedback from streets and letters from viewers, the researcher too argues that this is not sufficient because when letters come in praising or complaining, it is very hard to tell how much of the audience is represented. It is noted that some producers are sceptical of the value of more detailed feedback from the audiences. The pressure on those responsible for programmes is such that fuller or deeper analysis of audience reactions would amount to an intolerable strain" (Burns, 1977: 141). It is in Hagen's view (1999: 153) that a clearer image of the audience could also reduce the stress, or at least the uncertainty, related to being a producer. Further, some critics claim that the broadcasting institutions carry out audience measurements based on their own interest, with little interest to knowing their audiences. The main reason for the television institutions to produce this knowledge is in order to control and conquer the audience (Ang, 1991; Hagen, 1998: 136).

In light of the above observations, this study suggests that ethnographic audience research should be used to get feedback from the audience. This is because this type of research offers a means to gaining greater insight into the way people watch what they do, and why? Unlike quantitative audience research, ethnographic approaches act as a method of cultural investigation, as it takes into account the social world of actual audiences (Moore, 1995: 3) (see chapter one part one section 1.4.1.).

The excessive focus of Liberty Learning Channel on production and the economics, has the effect of shutting down the analysis of culture. It assumes that any meanings pertaining to the artifact/programme or activities outside the sphere of production, by their nature are of a lower order and hence are unworthy of serious consideration. Liberty Learning Channel fails to explore how the programmes are used in social relations and what significance they obtain as a consequence of this usage (Du Gay *et al.*, 1997: 84). Michel de Certeau (1984) argued that the meanings attached to or coded into objects in the act of their initial production are never automatically folded into the psychic life of those at whom they are aimed. Meaning, he argues, is also produced by consumers through the use to which they put those objects in the practice of their everyday life (Du Gay *et al.* 1997: 103).

Liberty Learning Channel should note that despite the enormous efforts made throughout the production process, through the use of design, advertising and marketing processes, profits are always dependent upon the ability of producers to interpret the changes in meaning that products undergo throughout their consumption. In this sense, production and consumption are not completely separate spheres of existence but rather are mutually constitutive of one another. What happens to a product in consumption has effects for producers and so on. Therefore, the meaning that products come to have are constructed in this process of dialogue albeit rarely an equal one in terms of power relations (Du Gay *et al.*, 1997: 103). Therefore, this study suggests that it is necessary for Liberty Learning Channel to monitor the consumption of the programme by taking feedback from the audience and that Liberty Learning Channel should take account of the feedback from teachers and students in their production, presentation and promotion of the programme in order to be able to come up with a programme which appeals to the target audience. Consumer activities are crucial to the introduction, modification and subsequent redeployment and marketing of the programme.

4.4.2. The Distribution of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

Pertaining to *Liberty Learning Channel programme*, it was established that the main text was the live broadcast aired Monday to Saturday on SABC 3. The broadcasts are supported by materials on videocassettes, which can be bought at the Learning Channel Campus, and by hiring tapes through Liberty Learning Channel video club (for members only). The broadcasts are also supplemented by Internet materials, the *Sowetan* supplement and in the near future by materials on CD-ROM (see chapter two part two section 2.2.5.6 part 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). It could be argued that Liberty Learning Channel's approach of using mixed medium allows each student to concentrate on using the medium which best suits his/her learning styles, needs and interests. However, results from the focus group interviews showed that the live television broadcast was the most watched by the majority of the participants (both teachers and students). This was followed by the *Sowetan* supplement, with tape-recorded materials being used by a few and the internet not being used by any of the participants (see chapter three part two section 3.2.2.3).

The study also revealed that real-time interactivity in both live school broadcast and phone-in programmes is initiated by use of a toll-free call-back telephone number that enables the viewers to communicate directly with the presenter. Other forms of interaction that are made include off-air calls to the presenter, and facsimile communications with the presenter. It is noteworthy that interaction is a crucial element in learning. According to Hillman, Willis and Gunawardena (1994), the key to effective learning is dependent on interaction. In this regard, other ways Liberty Learning Channel can provide opportunities to share is through the use of web technology like chatrooms and e-mail conversations (Bates, 1984; Christensen and Cowley-Dust, 1998). Audience participation can also be achieved by such means as panel discussions, role-playing, case studies and interviews (Moore, 1981).

4.4.3. The Consumption of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*

It is argued in this study that in order to understand the consumption of a cultural product such as *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, one needs to understand that a cultural product may mean different things to different people. This is more properly described as a matter of the works of “significance” rather than meaning (Hirsch, 1967: 2). In this view, significances may vary throughout history, whereas meanings remain constant. Authors “put in” meanings, whereas recipients assign significances. As Hobson (1982: 106) puts it: “the message is not solely in the “text”, but can be changed or “worked on” by the audience as they make their own interpretations of a programme”. This means that the reading is not a gathering of meanings from the text but a dialogue (Volosinov, 1973) between the text and the socially situated reader, as Morley (1980a: 18) says:

Thus the meaning of the text must be thought in terms of which set of discourses it encounters in any particular set of circumstances, and how this encounter may restructure both the meaning of the text and the discourses which it meets. The meaning of the text will be constructed differently according to the discourses (knowledge's, prejudices, resistance's etc.) brought to bear on the text by the reader and the crucial factors in the encounter of audiences/subject and the text will be the range of discourse at the disposal of audiences.

The recipient too will be influenced in ways that he /she interprets or “decodes” the message by his/her cultural background and the various ideologies (which includes both the ‘dominant’ and ‘resistance’ ideologies) of the society to which he/she

belongs. This is what the German ethologist (Sigmund Freud) called “umwelt” to denote merely an environment which surrounds us, but which is also in us. Indeed, from the point of view of development, “former” environments are forever in us, and since we live in a continuous process of making the present “former” we never, not even as a new born, meet any environment as a person who never had an environment (Erikson, 1968: 24).

It is worth mentioning that all the above arguments are put forward to stress the audience’s potential to respond actively and even argumentatively to the messages of the media and that we all bring to our viewing those other discourses and sets of representations which we are in contact with in other areas of our lives. Thus, how we respond to messages from the media depends precisely on the extent to which they fit with or possibly contradict what we have come across in other areas of our lives (Morley, 1992: 76-77). All the above aspects were borne in mind in investigating the consumption of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*.

In the present study, focus group interviews were conducted amongst teachers and students from four different regions of KwaZulu-Natal (see chapter one part two section 1.2). From the focus group interviews, results from the teachers showed that the most watched educational programme was *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*, with the majority of the students citing *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* and *Take 5* programme (see chapter three part two section 3.2.2.1). Further probing of the participants established how many of the participants actually watched *Liberty Learning Channel Programme*. In this regard, results indicated that several teachers from the different areas under study watched the programme, with the great majority of the students watching the programme. These results seem to imply that the programme is more popular to students than to the teachers. However, the great majority of the participants (both teachers and students) watched the programme sparingly, and they did their viewing at home and by themselves. Only one science teacher from Imbali stated that she watched videocassettes from *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* at school, and another science teacher and an English student from Imbali used the *Sowetan* supplement at home and at school. It is worth noting that the *Sowetan* supplement was not used by many participants and the Internet

materials were not used by any of the participants because they claimed that they had no access to the *Sowetan* and the Internet.

Watching of the programme with family (parents and siblings) was mentioned by several participants from all the regions under study. Several teachers from all the regions related that they watched the programme with their children. Almost all the teachers were unanimous that they watched educational programmes at home as their syllabus does not allow them to watch educational programmes at school because the school syllabus had specific sections to be taught (see chapter three part two section 3.2.2.1). These results corroborate findings of Hsun-Fung Kao and Wedman John (1995) in their study of faculty implementation of an educational innovation. These authors found that teachers' working conditions were often characterised by time constraints. The teacher had to attend to various responsibilities such as classroom management, material coverage, administrative duties, professional priorities, and the teachers were faced with the difficulty of 'squeezing' the programme into their curriculum daily routines.

Further, results revealed that some teachers from the Tongaat, Eshowe and Imbali (less resourced) regions watched or used the programme to learn new ideas, teaching methods and to get exercises and test questions. While some teachers from the Tongaat region and some mathematics teachers from Northlands Girls' High School (well resourced) watched the programme for curiosity (just to see what the presenters were doing). On the other hand, a host of students from the Eshowe, Imbali and Tongaat regions said that they used the programme to learn something new, to get a better understanding of what they were doing at school, and for revision. The programme was also utilised for revision by several students from multi-racial schools, Imbali and Tongaat regions. Some students from Queensburgh Girls' High School (multi-racial), Imbali and Tongaat regions related that they watched the programme to see different ways of explaining the same thing (see chapter two part two section 3.2.2.3.1 for more reasons why students and teachers watched the programme).

Take 5 programme was viewed by majority of the students from the different regions under study because it was a youth programme, related to youth situations and had

people they could look up to. The affinity to programmes about the youth and related to youth issues was also reported by Netshitomboni (1999: 81) in her study of educational programmes at Phalaphala FM. The students in this study suggested that youth should be encouraged to write stories which would be broadcast at Phalaphala radio. They added that such stories should deal specifically with teenage issues and be acted by teenagers. These respondents felt that this would be one way through which the radio station could make a contribution towards addressing problems that the youth encountered and could provide the youth with a platform to share their experiences. The fact that the producers and the hosts of the programme are also young meant that there is an understanding of and an almost automatic sensitivity towards the problems. Style and content of the programme automatically will address the young listeners because there is a mutual understanding between the senders and the receivers of the messages (Arnold, 1999: 395).

Findings showed that most of the teachers and students did not know anybody else who watched *Liberty Life Learning Channel Programme*. Of the few who disclosed that they knew someone who watched, a great majority did not discuss what they watched on the programme with them. Several reasons were put forward for not discussing the programmes. For example, majority of the teachers related that due to the inappropriate time slot and the fact that the programme teaches different topics or sections from what teachers are doing in the classroom, they could not discuss.

With regard to why some participants did not watch the programme, numerous reasons were given. For example, several teachers from the different regions under study revealed that not being aware of what was to be broadcast on a specific day and most of the programmes not coinciding with subjects or sections being done in class and the fact that teachers have no time to integrate the programme into their classroom, as they are required to finish the syllabus, made watching the programme difficult. Lack of exposure to the programme was named by several teachers from Imbali, Northland Girls' High School and also by some teachers from Eshowe region. Similarly, several English students from Eshowe and multi-racial schools gave the same reason for not watching the programme. These results are in agreement with findings by Research International (1998: 41) who found that students from Durban and the Cape showed a below average of awareness of the *Sowetan* supplement.

Some teachers from Werda High School, Imbali and Eshowe regions did not watch the programme because they were not aware of the time of broadcast, were at school or had family commitments. A number of science students from New Forest Secondary School, Port Natal High School, Imbali and Tongaat regions could not watch the programme due to lack of time as they were at school or taking extra lessons. These results imply that the “everyday life” as defined by Mackay (1997: 7) as being concerned with “the unpredictable, the improvised and with routine activities and control of ordinary people as they go about their day-to-day lives”, affected the viewing of the programmes.

It is imperative to mention that most of the respondents claimed not to watch the programme due to the inappropriate time slot. The majority of the participants felt that the morning times slot was bad because at that time they were in school. The time slot was also the most disliked aspect of the programme by a great majority of the students and several of the teachers. It was one of the things about the programme a great majority of the participants (both teachers and students) said they would change if given a chance to. Although it is clear that the Department of Education in 1996 and possibly also in 1997, assumed for planning purposes that there was not going to be equipment available in schools or community centres, and that for the most part, educational programmes broadcast by SABC would be accessed by learners and educators directly in the homes and should not rely for their effectiveness on equipment in schools (Department of Education, 1996: 10-11, 26), it is worth noting that the situation in schools has not changed that much. From this study, it was established that most of the viewing of educational programmes is still happening in the homes. Therefore, with the knowledge that *Liberty Learning Channel programme* is mostly watched at home and not at school, it is unwise to broadcast it at a time when most of the target audience is unable to view it. Although afternoon timeslot is provided on an ad hoc basis, and Saturday broadcast added extra time from mid 2003, these broadcasts are phone-in programmes, unlike the week day’s morning broadcasts where subject contents are covered. Therefore, students who are in school during the morning broadcasts still continue to be disadvantaged.

So, Liberty Learning Channel and the SABC (responsible for the time slot) should know that television programmes could be technically of high quality and imaginatively produced, but they would still be irrelevant to the learners if they were inaccessible through lack of electricity supply or inappropriate scheduling (Bates, 1980). Also, a piece of communicated message that is not received by its target audience is an exercise in futility (Nwosu, 1990: 90). Therefore, this study suggests that a sensitive schedule of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* should be provided. According to Pennells and Ezeomah (2000), sensitive scheduling of programmes ensures that messages are sent at the right time and without disrupting people's ways of life or work schedules. Other aspects of the programme disliked by some of the participants can be seen in chapter three part two section 3.2.2.4.5.

Despite the criticisms, the great majority of the participants liked the programme. For example, most of the teachers related that having *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* was a great concept as it helped with revision, where there were large numbers of students in class who may have difficulties and also where there are no schools in the nearby. A great majority of the students liked the programme because of the way the presenters explained clearly (see chapter three part two section 3.2.2.4.5). Also, a great majority of the teachers felt that the programmes promoted economic growth, reconstruction and development in some way, with a few of these teachers showing concern on the reach of the programme to those who do not have resources. Indeed, according to studies conducted in light of the theory of human capital, education plays an important role in socio-economic and cultural development (UNESCO, 1997: 215).

A few teachers from the different regions under investigation related that the programme promoted national identity as it was serving everyone. However, a great majority were of the opinion that the programme did not endorse national identity but in some ways supported regional identity. Some of the reasons given for the above assertion were that few people understood what the presenters were presenting because they spoke English. Several teachers from Tongaat, Imbali and Eshowe regions said that the presenters were not representative of the multi-racial South Africa society.

Further, a great majority of the teachers felt that the programme was not fixing the educational discrepancies of the past and a host of reasons were put forward (see chapter three part two section 3.2.2.6.3). For example, several teachers from multi-racial schools, Tongaat and Imbali regions made a case that the programme was not rectifying the educational imbalances of the past, as the past schools were unequal and had no properly qualified teachers in some schools. They felt that the programme was not addressing this issue because classes were still overcrowded and they were experiencing a shortage of qualified teachers. These results complement findings by van der Merwe, Windell and Michell (1988) that in the average black schools, the ratio of teacher to pupils was 1: 60 and that the system of education has a rather high proportion of untrained and under-qualified teachers.

A number of teachers from the Tongaat and Eshowe regions reported that the programme did not correct the educational one-sidedness of the past because all presenters were white. In fact all teachers forming Eshowe English teachers focus group interviews said that the programme was promoting the educational disparities of the past by having only white presenters. These results corroborate the conclusions that just like all other fields, the profile of educational broadcasting practitioners still display the apartheid past. The profile is overwhelmingly unrepresentative of South Africa, and more importantly, of the overwhelming percentage of those who engaged in teaching and learning endeavors (A framework for educational programming in South Africa: final report of the task team for the transformation of educational broadcasting¹⁰).

From the results obtained from teachers focus group interviews, it was also clear that majority of the teachers from the different regions felt strongly that the programme could be used to impart information on outcome based education (OBE) to teachers and students. However, several participants from the different regions added that the present format (lecture method) had to be changed to suit OBE methods. Some reasons why Liberty Learning Channel would help in this regard was because teachers

¹⁰ A framework for educational programming in South Africa: final report of the task team for the transformation of educational broadcasting.
<http://www.icasa.org.za/Default.aspx?page=12658&moduledata=571> date accessed 22/4/2004.

are confused about OBE, as mentioned by some teachers from Eshowe and Tongaat regions, and that in most cases those training the teachers in workshops knew nothing about OBE, as disclosed by a science teacher from Imbali (see chapter three part two section 3.2.2.6.4). It is suggested here that for OBE to be successful, the following criteria for implementation are necessary: education should be viewed as a journey rather than a destination, a process and not a product; assessment should be continuous; an engaging learning environment should be provided; parents and community should be involved in school operations (Boschee and Baron, 1994); teachers should be well-qualified; facilities should be state-of-the-art; and school governance reforms should be enacted (Brogan, 1995).

Several suggestions for the improvement of the programme were put forward (see chapter three part two section 3.2.2.7). Some of these suggestions included: change of the time slot; the programme to have multi-racial presenters; to film in schools and involve teachers and students in the filming; to give timetables to schools in advance, with details of the subject to be taught and when the subjects will be taught; to advertise the programme more not only through television, newspapers, but also through writing to schools; to change the programme from SABC 3 to SABC 1; dramatise poetry, use pictures and role play; to have learners in the studio; and to use humor while presenting as it catches the attention and makes students to enjoy the lesson.

It is important to mention that William Smith, the manager of the Liberty Learning Channel, was consulted on the possibility of implementing some of the suggestions put forward by the participants. Regarding the changing of the time slot, he responded that the SABC had total control of the time slot. On the issue of having multi-racial presenters, William argued that he could not use Black, Indian, Afrikaans and Coloured presenters because in his opinion they cannot speak English perfectly. With regard to having learners in the studio, he related that it does not work and wondered for what educational value the learners would serve. On filming on location or schools, William said that it was too expensive and students would be frightened by having cameras in the classroom.

Looking at the above responses from William Smith regarding considering some of the suggestions for improvement of the programme, it can be assumed that there is some reluctance in considering suggestions from the audience. Pertaining to filming in the classrooms, although expensive, Liberty Learning Channel should know that some of the most exciting elements for educational programmes are to be found on the streets, in work places, in the fields, in businesses and industries, and it would be a shame to neglect these important resources of programme material. With regard to having learners in the studio, Smith should know that learners have some educational value, as shown by Piaget (1955), who contended that both logical and social knowledge are created because of conflict and arguments with peers, and very little because of questioning and explanations. Children can motivate, challenge, stimulate knowledge creation, apparently much better than adults. Also, Piaget (1955:83) suggested that it may be through quarreling that “children first come to feel the need for making themselves understood”, a point of view highly regarded by others, such as Frey and Lupart (1987) and Liben (1987). It is at these junctures where the interactions of the child with adult models and other children can shed light on the potential impact of instruction, perhaps as dynamic contexts that stimulate the child to action, as in wanting to be understood or to prevail in an argument or point of view (Iran-Nejad, 1995).

Although meeting the demands and wishes from the audience is sometimes perceived as a threat to professional autonomy (Ang, 1991: 165), one has to indirectly take the audience into consideration in production. Therefore, this study suggests that Liberty Learning Channel should consider audience suggestions for the betterment of the programme. This is because educational broadcasts will not be effective unless they are relevant to educational goals and interest of their target audiences and attractive to those audiences. Educational broadcasting will fail if the programmes are not attractive to educators and learners and if they do not address those audiences in a way which captures and sustains their interest, and which address their specific educational needs in a relevant and appropriate way. In line with the principle of learner-centredness, educational programmes are unlikely to be successful educational resources unless the programme formats, languages, content and style are well designed to appeal to and effectively engage target audiences (Erdos, 1975; Department of Education, 1996: 28).

Other suggestions which are vital for the use of television/*Liberty Learning Channel Programme* effectively for information, instruction and education include television being used to effect existing educational practices successfully over large areas and covering large numbers. It should be an integral part of the national educational reform schemes. The users, teachers and students, should know the reasons and purposes for the introduction of televised instruction and everybody, as a team, should ensure that the purposes are achieved. Presenters should ensure that opportunities for interaction are included. In this regard, various electronic devices, for example, teleconferences, talk-back facilities, electronic bulletin boards, e-mail, teletext etc., can be used to make two way communication a success (Chaudhary, 1992). In instructional design, the challenge is to think in visual terms.

According to Gottschalk (2003), taking advantage of the visual imagery of instructional television can counter an over-reliance on lecturing. Carefully planned ways to show instead of tell may improve instructional effectiveness. During the presentation of the television programme, Gottschalk (2003) suggests that the presenter has to: vary facial expressions, tone of voice, body movements, and eye contact with the camera to enhance verbal communication. Students could be engaged by using humor, asking questions, involving, and praising students contributions and maintaining energy and dynamism to attract and hold the distance learners' attention. It is suggested in the present study that *Liberty Learning Channel* should consider the above suggestions if these are not already an integral part of the programme.

In conclusion, regarding the integration of *Liberty Learning Channel Programme* into the classrooms, it should be noted that patterns of usage of educational television have demonstrated a number of factors that influence the uptake and usage of programmes in curriculum implementations. For example, Forsslund (1991) described some conditions that have been found to enhance the use of broadcast television in school settings: increased access to equipment; regular transmission slots that are in accord with school timing; better fit to the curriculum; basis for follow-up discussions; series of programmes that pursue instructional goals across a series of episodes; information of the programmes delivered to teachers in advance of screening; and supplementary and guide materials to support broadcast programmes. Therefore, for *Liberty Learning*

Channel programme to be integrated into the classroom, there is need for increased access to equipment, appropriate time slot, topics being discussed in the programme to coincide with what is being taught in the classrooms; use of multi-racial presenters, provision of detailed information about the programme to teachers and students in advance before screening and provision of support materials to the broadcast.

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